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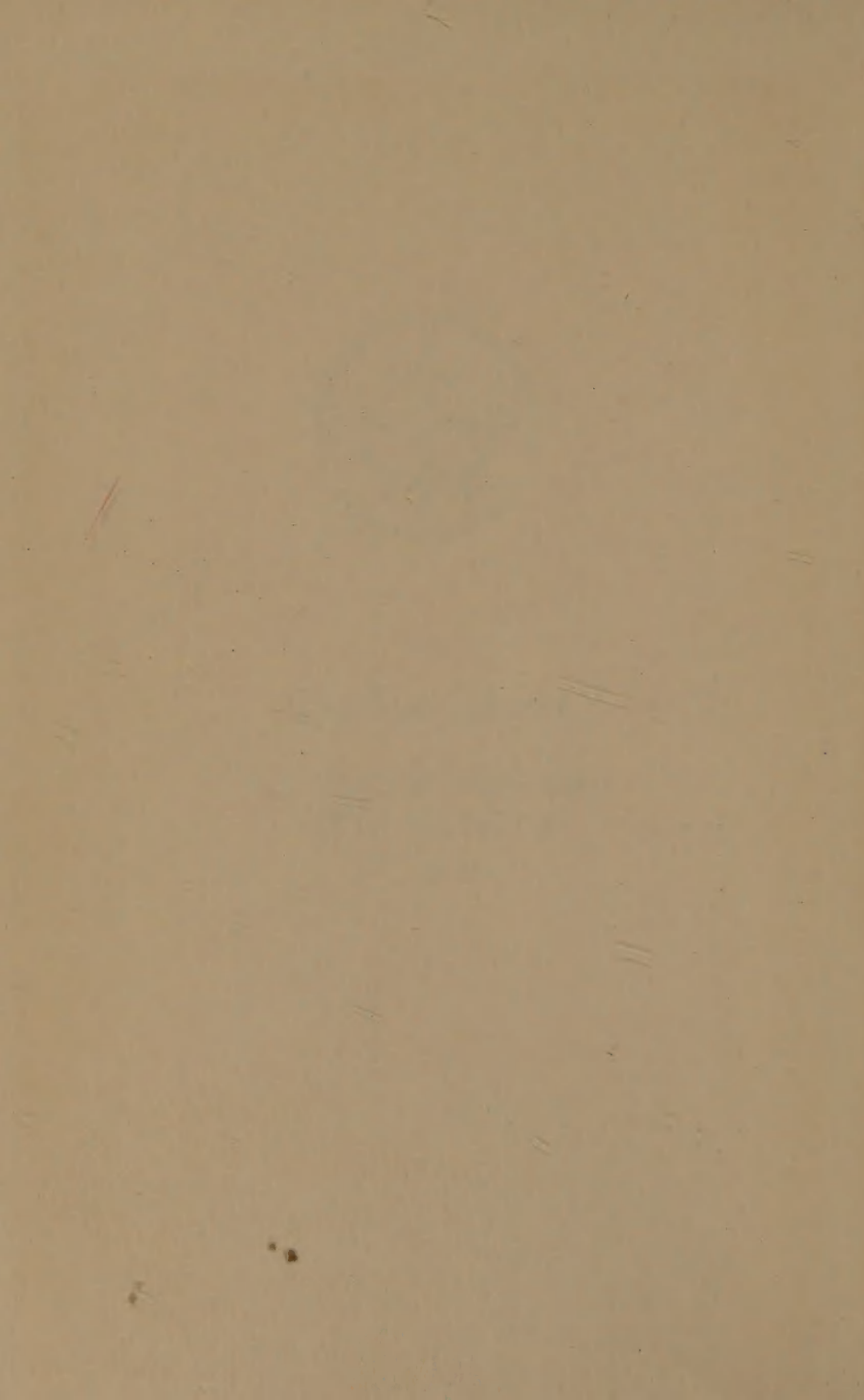
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SERENDIPITY



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J. Wallace Hamilton

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*To Florence whose alert mind and
gracious spirit have furnished
many unsought treasures*

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To His Majesty the King
George the Fourth
and His Consort the Queen
Charlotte Augusta
by
J. G. Thompson

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THE TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES
OF THREE PRINCES OF SERENDIP
THE TALE OF THE PRINCES

(TRANSLATED FROM PERSIAN INTO FRENCH AND FROM
THENCE DONE INTO ENGLISH.)

In those happy times when Kings were philosophers . . . there was in the East a powerful monarch named Fafer who reigned in the Kingdom of Serendip. This prince had three male children equally handsome, well made and very promising. As he loved them with extreme tenderness he was willing to have them instructed in all the necessary services to the end that they be worthy to succeed him in his dominions. He called them in one by one for instruction. Then to further their education he sent them out to travel into other lands.

They met a Leader of Camels who had lost one of his camels. They had observed the footsteps of the lost camel. They knew he was blind in one eye because grass on one side of the road was eaten more than on the other. They knew he was missing some teeth because every step, bits of grass were left untouched. They knew he was lame because one foot dragged on the grass. They knew he carried butter on one side and honey on the other because there were ants on one side which feed on fat and flies on the other which feed on sweets (*Microfile, Fifth Avenue Public Library, New York, N. Y.*)



What are you studying this year? Out of a casual question came this modest book.

One of the unexpected dividends of the ministry is the opportunity it brings for friendships with exceptional men. Our friend was Mr. William H. Danforth, late president of Purina Foods and dynamic founder of The Danforth Foundation. Every year he and Mrs. Danforth visited our city and once every year we had the privilege of having lunch with them and some mutual friends.

Once, sitting down to table, Mrs. Hamilton asked, "What are you studying this year?" He was always studying something. Without hesitation he answered, "Serendipity!" I mumbled something about a new breakfast food he was trying to promote. But he said, "No, it's quite a serious word. It is not yet in any dictionary except the unabridged. I suggest that you look it up." The lunch hour was filled with conversation about "serendipity."

That was twenty-seven years ago. I've been "looking it up" ever since, and speaking on it in civic clubs and church groups since 1937. On the small hinge of that conversation some rather large-size doors have opened for me. This book goes out with the hope that it may furnish some happy surprises for you.

I am indebted to many who have sent me examples of serendipity and also to many from whom I have borrowed (with permission, I hope) illustrations on the theme.

I wish also to express appreciation to Mrs. Mark Rigg, Mrs.

P R E F A C E

P R E F A C E

Charles Osborne, and Mrs. Wesley Alonso for transcribing and typing manuscripts, and for helpful corrections and editing by Mrs. Phyllis Murphy and Dr. Frank S. Mead.

SERENDIPITY

ser'en-dip'ity, 1 **ser'en-dip'i-ti**; 2 **sĕr'ĕn-dĭp'i-ty**, *n.*

The ability of finding valuable things unexpectedly: from a fairy tale, *The Three Princes of Serendip*, the heroes of which were continually finding valuable articles by chance: a word coined by Horace Walpole. [*<Serendip = Serendib, former name of Ceylon>*—*Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of The English Language. Vol. 2.*

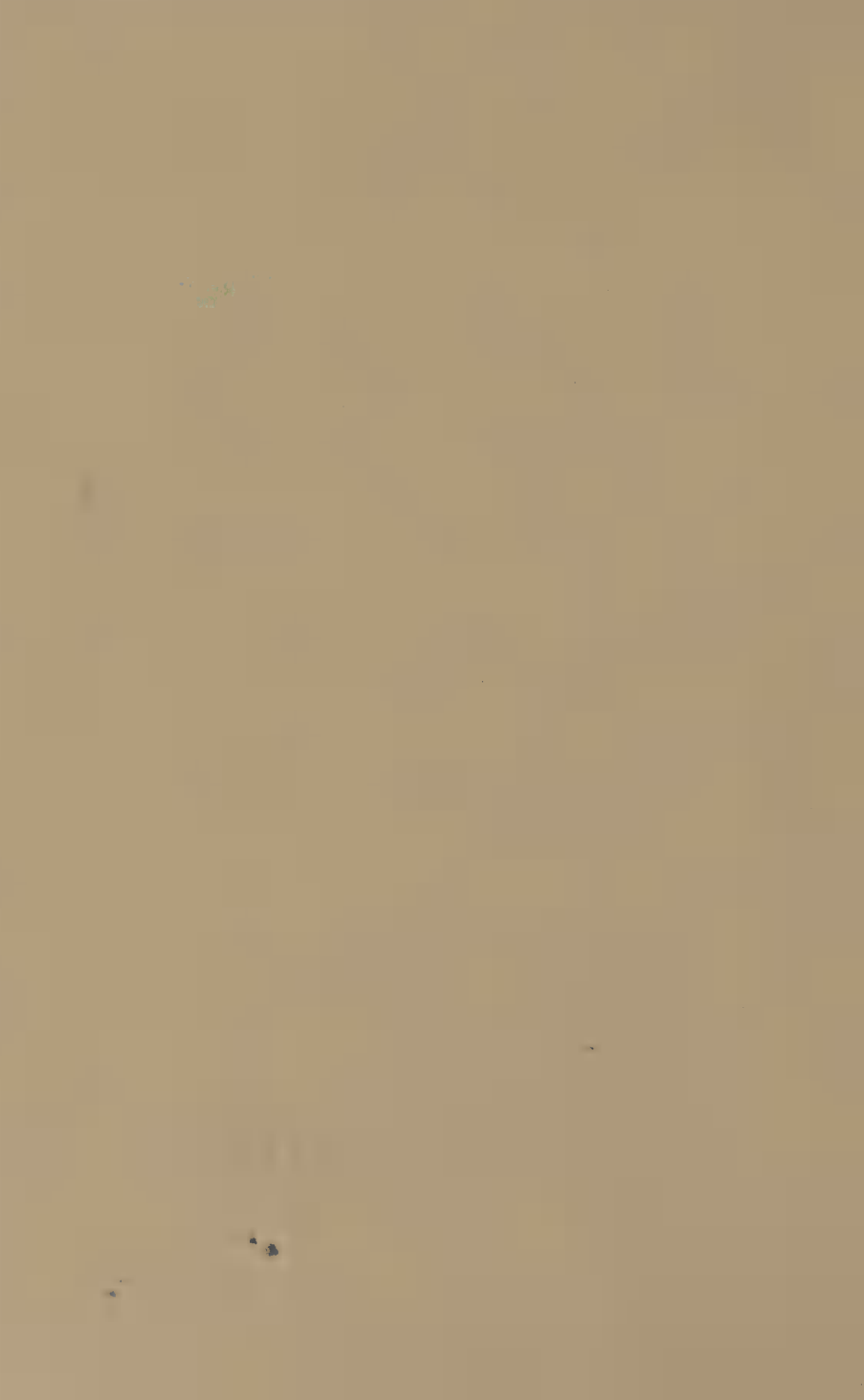
ser'en-dip'i-ty (**-dip'i-ti**), *n* [See SERENDIB.] The gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for;—a word coined by Walpole, in allusion to a tale, *The Three Princes of Serendip*, who in their travels were always discovering, by chance or by sagacity, things they did not seek—*Webster's New International Dictionary Second Edition, Unabridged Vol. II.*

ser'en-dip'i-ty (**sĕr'ən·dĭp'ə·tĭ**), *n.* The faculty of making desirable but unsought-for discoveries by accident. [f. (The Three Princes of) SERENDIP (who had this faculty) by H. Walpole + -ity]—*The American College Dictionary.*

... seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you—MATTHEW 6:33, *King James Version.*



SERENDIPITY





The Beginning of a Word

. . . seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you (MATTHEW 6:33).

A NEW YORK NEWSPAPER REPORTED AN INTERESTING SPEECH which a man made before a group of business executives. The speaker said that he certainly believed in the planned life—economic planning, international planning, social planning; without wise planning the future was quite hopeless. The best brains of the world should be brought together, he thought, and put to work on planning. Then, having drafted the plan, we should all sit back and look for exactly the opposite to happen. Some of the speaker's hearers laughed, betraying their party politics; others thought it was a slip of the tongue—"You don't mean opposite," they said. It was no slip of the tongue, he assured them; "I intended to say just that—that the world, for its salvation, needs first to draw up a great plan, to set a goal; second, to have something entirely different come out of it. Like Christopher Columbus. Columbus had a plan. He set out across the Atlantic to find Asia. His plan was a failure; he didn't make it. But in pursuit of it, he found something else that made a difference."

Serendipity! Most people now are somewhat ac-

quainted with this unusual word. It's an uncommon word for a very common experience. It means "the gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for." It's a word used to describe that strange process of indirection, the unexpected that happens when one is pursuing something else. Perhaps its definition is best provided by its derivation. It was Sir Horace Walpole who coined the word in 1754, basing it on a Persian fairy tale, *Three Princes of Serendip*. Serendip was the ancient or Arabic name for the island now called Ceylon. The legend was that every time the princes of Serendip went on a journey something unexpected happened; quite by coincidence they found valuable things not sought for. Sir Horace called it *serendipity*. In a letter to Horace Mann, January 8, 1754, he said he formed the word "because as their highnesses traveled they were always making discoveries by accident or sagacity of things they were not in quest of."

Certainly there ought to be a word for that, because life is full of it. "Columbus," as Emerson said, "looking for a direct route to Asia, stubbed his toe on America"; Edison, looking for an electric light, found a phonograph; a chemist, holding over the fire a test tube with a few grains of rice in it, happened to drop the tube, and when he picked it up the rice grains had exploded: puffed rice—serendipity!—seeking one thing and incidentally finding another.

For a quarter of a century I've been on the fascinating trail of serendipities. I have file folders full of them: clippings from medical magazines, scientific journals, and from many other casual sources, including those sent to me by friends who know of my interest in the matter. I have tried to check them carefully for accuracy and to separate the true ones from the false. And in pursuit of what began as an interesting hobby, I too have made the

mild discovery that this process of indirection is written deeply into all of life with almost the force of a law. Let it suffice in this opening chapter to list out of the increasing many a familiar few; then we will follow into an application in the higher levels of life.

Certainly the history of medicine is filled with serendipitous events. We could begin with Louis Pasteur, although long before his time medical history had recorded many fortunate surprises. It was Pasteur who said, "Chance favors the prepared mind," and he, himself, was his own best illustration. Looking for a way to keep wine from turning sour, by chance he found the process of pasteurization. What a lifesaver that has been!

The discovery of anesthetics came, in part, by accident. Dr. Crawford Long of Jefferson, Georgia, heard an itinerant lecturer speak on laughing gas which, when inhaled, made people laugh-happy. Having had some experience with ether, Dr. Long tried it out; he put a man to sleep—even as the Lord did with Adam in the Eden story. Oliver Wendell Holmes named it "anesthesia." Wilhelm Roentgen, a professor in a Bavarian university, after class one day was working with the vacuum tube for improved photography, and leaning wearily on the table saw some unusual fluorescent action that started him down a two-year trail to the X ray.

In the field of allergies and vaccines there are many fascinating stories. Smallpox was once the world's most terrifying minister of death. Edward Jenner developed a safe vaccine, not by long, arduous study in the laboratory, but by a fortunate flash of memory. At nineteen he had had a sweetheart who was a milkmaid, and she told him one day that she could not get smallpox because as a child she had had cowpox. This bit of country wisdom lay in his memory for years and was recalled to mind during a threatened epidemic of smallpox. It was said of

Edward Jenner that he saved more lives than all the wars of Napoleon had destroyed.

Out of the study of blood cells have come many fortunate serendipities. Minot experimented with dogs, ran out of money, bought liver to feed them because it was the cheapest food, and found liver doing something to their blood. So he dropped what he was after, followed a new trail, and now we take liver shots for anemia. Some veterinarians in the prairie states were baffled by a strange bleeding ailment that was killing off their cattle. A smart chemist in Canada discovered that it occurred only in animals feeding on a certain kind of inadequately-cured clover hay. The Mayo Clinic pricked up its ears. So, in the process of trying to keep cattle from bleeding to death, they stumbled onto what surgeons had been praying for to prevent blood clots.

I found an interesting serendipity in *Fortune* magazine. Some far-scattered researchers, seeking the cause of infertility, came up instead with a vaccine for birth control. That means they made a discovery when moving in exactly the opposite direction. There are many illustrations of this. There's a product on the market which kills poison ivy, and the men who found that one were working on a fertilizer: trying to stimulate plant growth, they overshot the mark and got a weed killer.

Take one more discovery in medicine: penicillin. The story is well known—how an open window and a gust of wind blowing through it contaminated the plate cultures in Alexander Fleming's laboratory in St. Mary's Hospital. And through his microscope he saw that wonderful blue mold deliver a knockout blow to all kinds of little bugs. You never can tell, in this wonderful world, when some luminous secret will leap out of its hiding place and shout, "Surprise!"

Now, when we move into the wider fields of scientific investigation, serendipity is perhaps more the rule than the exception—at least its history is marked by some very happy surprises. We are familiar with the many legends, whether apocryphal or authentic, of the man who saw an apple fall and learned from its earthbound motion the great force that holds all things together; the man who saw the lid of a kettle rise, and came up with the steam engine; the man who watched a lamp swinging in the Cathedral of Pisa and set a pendulum swinging in grandfather's clock. These are all serendipities, combinations of happy chance and prepared minds. The magic world of science is full of unforeseen, unpredictable surprises. Baekeland, searching for synthetic camphor, found Bakelite. Alexander Graham Bell, trying to improve the telegraph, got a telephone—unfortunately. A Wilmington chemist, trying to duplicate silk fabric, came up with a nylon stocking.

Glass is a serendipity. According to the old story which can never be fully verified, some Phoenician sailors anchored their ship off the North African coast. Unable to find stones on which to set their cooking pots, they took lumps of saltpeter from the cargo of their ship and set their kettles on them. In the heat of the fire the saltpeter melted, mingled with the sand, and when it cooled they had a hard, clear, transparent substance—glass. So runs the old story which the encyclopedia says should not be discarded as wholly fiction.

Charles Goodyear spent many good years trying to take the stickiness out of rubber. One night, by sheer accident, he left a piece of rubber which he had smeared with sulphur near a hot stove. Next morning it was "vulcanized." He called it that after Vulcan, god of fire. Here's a sweet one: a chemist forgot to wash his hands before lunch, and wondered why his roast beef sandwich

tasted sugary. He went back to the laboratory and out of his soiled hands got saccharin. That has been called "the sweetest serendipity on record"—but not the most spectacular. Hold your breath—the atom bomb! Dr. William Pollard, director of the nuclear studies at Oak Ridge, absolves his scientific colleagues from moral blame in at least the original discovery of atomic energy. As he said, no one ever suspected that it was to come from the very different problems on which they were all working separately. No one was looking for the bomb.

In Dr. Harlow Shapley's account of how the astronomers stumbled on the artificial splitting of the uranium atom, he employs the word "serendipity" to describe it. It all came about, he said, through the confluence of many minds. The astronomers who were seeking the secret of constant sunlight, the chemists, geologists, fossil-pickers—all working with radioactivity in the rocks—found themselves meeting each other out on the far, dim edge of things and on the trail of something greater than they knew. Let me quote Dr. Shapley:

"It has been called serendipity, this faculty of finding a result of significance while searching for something else. For they found results that forced the astro-physicists, in searching vigorously again for a sufficient explanation of constant sunlight, to make a speculative invasion of nuclear physics and to find there a clue to the coming of the atomic era."

So we've come far enough at least to put this down: in many of the most exciting discoveries of human history all the way from grandfather's clock to the most epoch-making breakthrough of the ages—the process of indirection can be traced clearly: something was discovered while the discoverers were pursuing something else.

We must pause here for a word of clarifying caution. It

would be a mistake to label these surprises as merely accidents, as though they were the products of casual strollers and lazy minds. They are surprises, to be sure, and unexpected, but they are almost every one of them by-products of serious, often self-effacing search—something discovered while the discoverers were earnestly seeking something else. In fact, one dictionary defines “serendipity” as the aptitude for making fortunate discoveries—“aptitude.” Joseph Henry, the American physicist, said, “the seeds of great discoveries are constantly floating around us, but they only take root in minds well prepared to receive them.”

We should be prepared then for the parallel in the higher realm of mind and spirit because the physical world is but the shadow of the spiritual world, as Professor Drummond long ago pointed out, and Plato long before him. Since life itself, like the search for truth, is a voyage into the unknown, we should not be surprised that it should hold happy surprises for the voyagers. In fact, it was Jesus who gave to us the greatest of all serendipities, “Seek first the Kingdom of God,” as though to say, “Make that your aim, your goal, your life pursuit, and you will find something—something unexpected, unlooked for—lying there along the path of your search.” Any number of valuable, agreeable things will be added as the incidental fruitage of your seeking.

Now, then, we are into something far-reaching and profound. Someone said this was the most comprehensive utterance ever made on our planet: “. . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (MATTHEW 6:33). It penetrates deeply into the nature of our time, into the essential nature of this very wonderful world, and into

the nature of God too, who created it and ordained the nature of its laws.

We have two ways of acquiring the necessities of life: one is the way of action, the other the way of reception. Some things we can get by aggression, by going after them; some things we can get only by indirection, by going after something else. It is in the first area that we are most at home. We are the product of an aggressive culture, the descendants of immigrants who had to conquer a wilderness. We were brought up to believe that the way to get anything is to go after it; that is the method in which we're most skilled—the direct method. We want results, quick results, immediate results. Put the cash down; wrap up the package. We turn on lights in henhouses to fool the hens into laying before breakfast. Someone saw a sign on a Pennsylvania highway: "Antiques manufactured while you wait." This is the temper of our time. The way to get anything is to go after it, head-on, get it, and get it now.

Many fine things have come out of that method. We do not minimize its importance, but it has its limitations. It works very well in the material—it's of almost no use in the spiritual. Some of the very finest things in life do not come that way. You can get Cadillacs by putting down the cash—not character, not even culture. You can get a house, but not a home. You can get money, but not the real riches of life. Some of the most desirable things come by reception, by indirection, from something added and often unexpected in the earnest pursuit of something quite beyond us.

This book has to do with the process of indirection in the higher levels of mind and spirit, those valuable and agreeable gifts which the New Testament calls "the *fruits* of the spirit."

THE BEGINNING OF A WORD

Dr. Paul Scherer, speaking of Job's impatience to get immediate and direct answers to his questions, said, "Greatness and peace and happiness are simply not proper ends for any human soul to set for itself. They are the by-products of a life that has held steady like a ship at sea to some true course worth sailing."

Here then is a wide area in life yet to be adequately explored. And it cannot be explored by the methods with which we get houses and skyscrapers. "Seek first the Kingdom of God," was our Lord's great formula for life. If we, the inhabitants of this small satellite planet, ever really give ourselves to this pursuit—the Kingdom of God—and bring to it the same dedication we bring to atoms and spaceships, we shall be prepared to live in the space age and perform a new work in the world.

...that your joy may be full... (JOHN 15:11).

years ago. One brash young minister (who happened to be me), bristling a bit with the implied criticism in the question, said, "The reason we ministers shy away from the happiness theme is that we are in complete revolt against the happiness-seekers whose underlying assumption is that happiness is the goal of life. We do not believe that. Whatever else it is, happiness is not the purpose of human existence." Another angry young man went further. He thought we were wasting our several abilities in even discussing the question, because first, it isn't an important one, and second, it is impossible to answer since nobody knows what the thing is. We find no consistencies in the philosophies, no marked road to it anywhere. We can't agree on either the content or the intent.

Some, like the ancient Epicureans, think it is the chief good, the pursuit of which is every man's inalienable right. Others think it is one of humanity's illusions, a mirage which all our pursuing can never overtake. And we are not without those yet who, like Carlyle, disparage it, scorn it as an unworthy pursuit. "What right hast thou to be happy?" Carlyle said. "What act of legislature promised it thee?" He believed that our desire for happiness was born of our vanity. "We fancy some reward is due us and we rate ourselves too high. It would be better for us to fancy that we deserve to be hanged, then we would feel it happiness to be only shot." Thus my young friend argued that day: since happiness is nothing but a vague and wispy word by which everyone understands something different, we who preach the gospel of Christ should ignore it as unimportant and get on with the business of what is.

I am glad to report that some saner voices prevailed that day as the discussion moved from the surface to the deep places, as all life-questions ultimately do. Some

THE CLUE TO HAPPINESS

older ministers among us, wiser in the ways of God, provided a corrective and reminded us that while there is much vagueness and disagreement as to the nature of happiness and how it may be achieved, there is an almost universal belief in at least its possibilities, and that the gospel of Christ is not incompatible with the pursuit of happiness. On the contrary, far from disparaging the age-old quest for happiness, Christianity begins by assuming it and pointing the way to it. By its consistent emphasis on the deeper note of redemption, it provides the one dependable clue to its fulfillment.

Despite many caricatures, Christianity is basically a joyous religion and Christ was so joyful a Man that He called Himself the Bridegroom of the world. He actually had to defend Himself from the accusations of His over-pious enemies and explain to the people why He and His disciples were so joyful. He began the Sermon on the Mount with a list of "blesseds"—nine ways to be happy. And the characteristic note of the New Testament is not sorrow, but joy. On the last night before His Crucifixion, He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (JOHN 15:11).

What we have to see is that there are far-reaching spiritual laws that govern the universal search. Happiness is not haphazard; it doesn't drop out of the sky, nor come to us by accident. Whatever else the universe may be, it grows constantly more certain that it is not haphazard. From top to bottom, it is a dependable, methodical world where fruits are related to roots and consequences are traceable to causes. People who think happiness is accidental, that it drops out of the sky like rain, forget that even rain is not accidental. It is the motion of previous movements, the consequence of many causes hidden from our eyes.

What then are the basic laws of happiness, and how do we learn them? I suppose the clearest law upon which there is fundamental agreement is that this inner music of the soul which we have named "happiness" is *essentially and inevitably a by-product, that it comes invariably by indirection*. To pursue it, to pounce upon it, to go directly after it, is the surest way not to obtain it. People who make a mission of it miss it, and people who talk loudly about the right to be happy seldom are. It's a by-product, a *serendipity*, "an agreeable thing not sought for," something added in the pursuit of something else.

That gets us into the Christian understanding of happiness. It's always the consequence, the fruit of the spirit—"The fruit of the spirit is joy."

Happiness is first of all the consequence of *inner stability*—and we had better underscore both the adjective and the noun: *inner stability*, not outer security. Here is where the illusion of pursuit begins, and why so much of it terminates in the aspirin box. We tend to externalize the search and put our hope in things added. We can't shake our minds free from the notion that life does consist in the abundance of things we can possess, and that our inner well-being is dependent upon outward circumstance, the things that happen to us. Indeed the word itself in its etymology encourages the illusion. Happiness is derived from *hap*, a three-letter Scandinavian word meaning "luck, chance, fortune" that which happens to us. If fortune would only smile, we could be happy. If luck would break for us on the stock market—if we could get a better job, a better house to live in—if we could get married—if we could get unmarried. *Hap!* We externalize the search and keep postponing happiness until something better happens.

Of course, it would be pious hypocrisy to say that our sense of well-being is not vitally affected by what hap-

pens to us. We are confronted every day with people to whom some change in outward circumstance would make a wholesome difference. The great unrest in the world today is in large part rooted in intolerable circumstance. We don't expect people to be hilariously jubilant when they are hungry, hurt, or caught in the coils of misfortune. What happens to us is not unimportant.

But neither is it all-important, and here is the first clue to the Christian understanding of happiness. Our well-being is not wholly at the mercy of "happenstance," circumstance, the things that happen to us. Certainly the joyousness of Jesus wasn't: "... foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (MATTHEW 8:20). And the "blesseds" He pronounced to people poor and hard pressed held no promise of changing outward circumstance or adding to the furniture of fortune. "Happy are the meek . . .," "Happy are the merciful . . .," "Happy are the pure in heart . . ."—it all had to do with something within: not outward security, but inner stability.

The verdict of life agrees with that. Some of the most significant lives have been lived with a minimum of furniture. The suicide rate is higher among the haves than among the have-nots. Every once in a while the pollsters who sample public opinion on all questions make a survey of this too, revealing only what everyone already knows: that many people without material advantages are surprisingly happy, and a considerable number of the unhappy ones are among those who are so fortunately situated that they are distressingly bored. There is no assurance that something added on the outside will make you happy.

Years ago John Balderson wrote a play which has been revised and plagiarized and televised until it has been altered out of recognition. A man died and opened his eyes in the next world. As he looked around, his first

thought was, "It could have been worse." He saw beauty, luxury beyond anything he had dreamed or ever heard described by apocalyptic vision; every wish was granted, every want satisfied; nothing was withheld from his desire. An obliging attendant mysteriously appeared and disappeared to provide instant answer to his slightest whim. After a while, however, he grew restless and impatient. He longed for the variety of some refusal. But the months went by as he got everything he wanted. One day he confronted the attendant with a demand: "I want something," he said, "that I can't have without earning it." The attendant said he was sorry, but that wish was not provided for. So the man lost his temper and burst out in a most unheavenly expletive: "In that case, I don't wish to stay here! I much prefer to go to hell." Whereupon the attendant said, "And where do you think you are, sir?"

You wonder sometimes if we're not on the wrong track in our frantic pursuit of happiness. Forty billion dollars a year, *Life* magazine says, we spend on the pursuit of it—on things to do, places to go, stuff to swallow. Everything on the outside and so little attention to the qualities within.

We could quote Carlyle approvingly here. He said the source of man's unhappiness lies in his potential greatness, the big dimension of his nature. Because he is the infinite in process, nothing added to the outside can satisfy the big dimensions of his soul. God never made the soul of man so small that it could be satisfied with the multiplicity of things. Robby Burns said:

*If happiness hath not her seat
And center in the breast,
We may be wise or rich or great,
But never can be blest.*

That brings us quickly to another Christian clue: happiness is the *by-product of holiness*. Or, if that word sounds too theological, say wholeness—same thing: health, wholeness, holiness; all stem from the same root, the harmonious fulfillment of all normal desires. The richness of human personality is in the wide range and variety of its potentials—physical, mental, moral, spiritual. When we forget the big dimension of our nature, when we concentrate on a fragment, trying to satisfy one part of us at the expense of the rest of us, we end up with small, temporary pleasures but not happiness. Happiness is the fulfillment of the total self. As Dr. Hocking said, "It's the state of going somewhere wholeheartedly and unanimously." You would think we'd be smart enough to see the inevitable connection between happiness and wholeness of life.

That is why those who seek happiness in sensual pursuits are always disappointed. They can't get away from the rest of themselves. Last week I went back and read again Bertrand Russell's celebrated lecture: "How to Be Free and Happy." Somewhere along in the twenties we had a déluge of books telling us how to be happy, all obsessed with the doctrine of self-expression. Russell, the well-known English philosopher, and his second wife suddenly discovered the elusive secret of happiness, and with almost missionary zeal wrote books and essays and delivered addresses to enlighten their generation on the subject. Their thesis was that many of our inherited moral ideas are obsolete—such as marital fidelity, faithfulness to one mate; that modern people have been seriously misdirected by Puritan theology, frustrated by the unnatural restraints of a gloomy religion. They talked much about the "instinctual life," "biological drives," "the natural impulses of the happy animal." These animal impulses in us are natural, therefore right, and we should

have freedom to express them. It is harmful to personality to suppress, bottle up, or by the restraints of religion reduce our normal physical impulses. Such was the gospel of the twenties—self-expression.

Most of us Christians would agree with the premise that all our normal, God-given impulses are good. In fact, we agree with it so much that we carry the thesis much further, so much further as to contradict the whole conclusion. For we hold that we are spiritual beings, too, and that our physical impulses are a fragment of the total self—a mental, moral, spiritual self. What about these higher impulses? If it's harmful to personality to frustrate the animal part of us, what about the rest of us? What about the suppressed morality, loyalty, devotion? What about the frustration of the spiritual self? What happens when our right to be happy gets interfered with by someone else pursuing his?

The plain fact is that the most bored, unhappy, maladjusted people in the world are those who make a pursuit of happiness on the level of the senses and go bull-dozing their way through the moral law, saying, "I have a right to be happy. I have a right to live my own life," when they're not living their real lives at all. They are simply overemphasizing a fragment of their nature at the expense of the rest, leaving terribly frustrated and unsatisfied a whole range of their beings above and beyond the physical. The elusiveness of happiness on this level has been the major note in all the pessimistic literature and philosophy of history—the sad, melancholy gaiety of the sensualists. Will Rogers used to talk about a druggist who was asked if he ever took time off to have a good time. The druggist said, no, he didn't, but that he sold a lot of headache medicine to those who did.

Something in the spirit of man refuses to be satisfied with a fragment. It's the total self we have to reckon

with, the big dimension. Man can no more rid himself of this dimension than he can get rid of his senses. The higher self in him feels cheated and will take terrible revenge on him when he seizes a present pleasure at the expense of a long-range good. Not the conventions of society, not the restraints of religion—it's the rest of him that he can't get away from! Take the alcoholic as an extreme illustration. He gets a temporary pleasure in a bottle, and nobody begrudges him his unheroic satisfaction. But does anyone suppose that he is happy trying to satisfy an appetite of the body at the expense of his self-respect? The rest of him—what terrific revenge it takes out on him! When conscience goes in one direction and conduct in another, the springs of happiness dry up; for happiness is wholeness, going somewhere wholeheartedly.

Here is the psychological soundness of the Christian doctrine of conversion. When the total self is awakened, when the whole being comes alive unto God and begins to move somewhere unanimously, God puts the sound of laughter in the soul. The joy of conversion is the music of wholeness. Remember John Masfield's singing words ("The Everlasting Mercy"):

*O glory of the lighted mind,
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind:
The station's brook to my new eyes
Was babbling out of paradise.
The waters rushing through the rain
Was singing, Christ has risen again.*

Happiness is wholeness!

That brings us to a final clue: happiness is the *indirect consequence of usefulness*. There has never been any se-

cret in the fact that work is enjoyable. Michelangelo said, "It is well with me only with a chisel in my hand." Work—all work and creative activity carries in it some measure of pleasant compensation, partly because we are made by our Creator to be creative, and partly because occupation is nine-tenths preoccupation. When we are preoccupied we're not thinking of ourselves. I suppose that is why hobbies and happiness go well together. When we are wholeheartedly preoccupied by something beyond ourselves, we are not thinking about ourselves. Here is the clue to the great secret, the small key that opens up the big door. Christianity whispers in our ear the subtle discovery that the highest human happiness is found in the kind of activity which to the prudent self-seekers seems absurd: self-forgetful devotion to something beyond the self. You lose life to find it. You don't seek happiness at all; to get it you have to forget it, take no thought of it. You make yourself useful to somebody, or you pick up some creative work needing to be done; lose yourself, forget yourself, and happiness comes along in the parentheses.

There is no truth Jesus emphasized more, or that life more consistently affirms, than that self-seeking in all its subtle forms is self-defeating and foredoomed to failure. Center yourself upon yourself and you will very quickly become the kind of self you won't enjoy living with. Miser and misery stem from the same root—"He that saveth his life shall lose it."

I once heard Sir Wilfred Grenfell speak on the joy of service. In his quiet and penetrating way he was saying what the ages have been saying—that the greatest joy in life is in creativeness, in working with God to make some finer thing come to be. He was talking about the increasing number of people who are fed up with life mostly because they've never found anything outside themselves

THE CLUE TO HAPPINESS

to live for or fasten themselves to. He said they were very much like the little barnacles at the seashore: when they were born, the little barnacles gave promise of being free-swimming animals, but very early they learned to attach themselves to the pilings, grew a hard shell on the outside, and spent the rest of life hanging on and kicking food into their mouths with their hind legs. Then he went on to say that all through his practice as a doctor such people had come to him with health problems, only to get around invariably to the question, "Doctor, is life worth living?" To which he always made answer: "That depends on the liver."

So the secret is not a hidden one, nor out of reach of anyone. Happiness is usefulness, redemptive usefulness, wholehearted devotion to those ends for which creation is working. Mature people never pursue it, seldom bother to think of it, and are strangely indifferent to the question as to whether or not they are personally happy. They are seeking something else. They are asking not, "What do I want?" but, "What is wanted of me?" Missionaries in the main are happy people. Why? Mostly because they have learned the Christian secret of redemptive joy, a joy that does not escape sorrow but embraces it. They've attached themselves to the world's sorrow and its struggles. They've learned to forget themselves and devote themselves to the ends for which creation and creation's God are working.

A minister from Canada told this story. One day he watched some boys having fun on the banks of a river. The spring floods had brought the logs down from the shanties in the hills to the lumber mills in the lower cities. Some logs get to be casualties in that process; in the swollen waters of the springtime they get stranded on the rocks that line the banks or get caught in the backwaters when the river goes down. The boys were amusing them-

selves by rolling huge logs down the rocky slopes into the river. It was a big task for their small strength. Had they been required to do it, they would have resented and resisted stubbornly. But as the logs splashed into the deep water and sailed down in the foam of the current, they would laugh and shout in wholehearted enjoyment. It was fascinating fun to see the imprisoned logs released into the free-flowing current of the river.

Something like that is the joy of redemption of which the New Testament is full. There walked a Man along our shores with eyes to see the big dimensions of the human soul. He found men and women who had been thrust out of the mainstream of life, stranded on the banks where they had been caught in some shallow backwater, feeling the futility of life. He aroused them, released them into the deep channels of eternal life. He said that this work He was doing—finding and saving lost people, releasing them into fullness of life—was part of the happiness of heaven. And anyone who is doing that, even to a small degree—working with Him in releasing life, helping a child to get a right start, helping someone develop the eternal possibilities within him—need never set out in pursuit of happiness. The joy of the Lord, the gladness of God, the happiness of heaven will come to dwell richly in his heart.



3

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . .
(MATTHEW 6:28).

"CONSIDER THE LILIES . . .," JESUS SAID, "HOW THEY GROW . . ." (MATTHEW 6:28). There are many unsolved mysteries in the world, none more marvelous or indeed more miraculous than the eternal mystery of growth—the silent, invisible, universal process going on through millions of years in forest and field and sea; and without which this planet, like the moon around it, would be a barren desert of dust. Growth! We're so accustomed to its regularity that we scarcely give a thought to its great mystery.

Have you ever considered the lilies—how they grow, how anything grows, how a seed gets to be a flower, how a blob of protoplasm gets to be a child, then a man, then a mind mature? How does anything grow? This is one of the deep-down questions. In fact, so great is the magnitude of the mystery that we have no language yet to describe it fully, and apparently no eyes yet to penetrate beyond the merely visible. The biologists are doing their human best: split up into specialties to study the basic building-blocks of life, they've traced it to the cell and have demonstrated that under the microscope you can see the process of growth. You can see the single cell

expand, divide, multiply itself; you can see things grow. A healthy cornstalk will increase its weight as you watch it. Up in Alaska, with long days and darkless nights, people say that if you listen, you can hear the corn grow.

But there's still the question, "*How* does it grow?" What pushes it to grow? What gives the cell the urge and intelligence to divide and multiply itself? All we have seen is the near side, the observable. What's on the other side? Scientists can make an eye, but it cannot see. They can make protoplasm, but it does not live. What is the life force that animates all living things? And why is it that when we speak of nature it seems most fitting to say, "Mother Nature"? Someday, perhaps, when the thin veil between the seen and the unseen is lifted, we shall understand better the mystery of growth. In the meantime, all we have is the consciousness that there is a mother-soil in which all living things are nourished and upon which their continuance depends. Some call it nature; others call it God.

That's why the Sermon on the Mount has a greater depth than that which appears on the surface. It is not a series of happy little maxims for the regulation of life, but rather a revelation concerning the essential nature of life. Jesus is talking here about how life works and the conditions that make it possible. Underlying every utterance of Jesus is the conviction that everything that lives is planted deeply in the providence of God, is enveloped by it, enfolded in it, dependent on it, and apart from it nothing can exist. We live and move and have our being in a vast procedure in which all things are related and out of whose mother-soil comes life in all its varied and expanding forms. In these few fragment-sayings about birds and grass and lilies of the field there's a wonderful insight into the mystery of growth, and that is that it is mostly a matter of reception; not something we produce

by conscious, aggressive action, but something given, something added, when we make our lives available to the gift. Some things we can get by action, by going after them, but the finest things in life are serendipities. They come by indirection, in the pursuit of something else.

It is clear enough in the area of physical growth: "Which of you," asked Jesus, "by taking thought"—that is, by conscious effort—"can add one cubit unto his stature?" (MATTHEW 6:27). When we were youngsters it was exciting to watch ourselves grow, to measure ourselves with a yardstick against the doorjamb every day to check how much we had grown since yesterday. But we stopped doing that when we learned there was no use trying to force it. We can't make it happen; we can't hurry it by straining to produce it. By no aggressive method can we manipulate growth. It is simply not in our hands. It comes by indirection. It is always something added when our attention is directed elsewhere.

Look at the plant world: "Consider the lilies, how they grow." In this beautiful bit of poetry worn thin by too much usage, we are reminded of something much more than poetry. The whole plant world upon which we depend for sustenance is made possible by its dependence on the invisible forces of creation. Drop a seed into the ground, and the instant it touches the earth it becomes surrounded and enveloped in a providential process involving the total universe. Have you ever thought of what a wide cooperation of powerful, invisible, planetary forces is required to make a tiny flower, a green leaf, a single blade of grass? It takes everything to make one thing. Almost one hundred million miles away the sun shines down, the earth turns, the seasons come, the tides move in with the pull of the moon; the warm air rises from the oceans in an elaborate air-conditioning system

of condensation and evaporation; the lightning flash releases the nourishing nitrogen, drops it to earth in the rainstorm—and that tiny seed, that green leaf on which all living things are nourished, is linked up with the total activity of nature. The smallest blade of grass calls into play the entire planetary system with all its interrelated movements.

*There's part of the sun in an apple
And part of the moon in a rose
And part of the flaming Pleiades
In every leaf that grows.*

AUGUSTUS WRIGHT BAMBERGER

"Consider the lilies, how they grow"—there's more than poetry in that. ". . . they toil not, neither do they spin" (MATTHEW 6:28); that is, they do not strain to produce growth or beauty. They're enveloped by mighty influences; they make their roots available to the gift, and without weaving they are woven into a beauty and glory which even the splendor of kings cannot match.

He might have said, "Consider the children, how they grow." This is no less a mystery. How does a boy go about the business of growing up? It's the most imperceptible, quiet thing you ever witnessed—I mean the growth. The boy takes no thought of it; he grows without trying or even knowing. He gives his whole attention to something else. He wants to play ball, make the team. He studies the stance of big-league pitchers. He plays, not merely because he wants to, but because he has to. Nature keeps him moving with a built-in, self-charging battery of inexhaustible exuberance. He rolls, wrestles, climbs trees, gets awfully dirty and awfully hungry; he eats until you wonder where he puts it. He begins to find

fault with his clothes—his sleeves get too short, his jacket too tight, his pants won't fit anywhere; and he grumbles about that, until one night grandmother looks at him through her bifocals: "Why, bless me, this boy is getting too big for these things! He's growing like a weed." And he stands there looking sheepish; he had no idea he was growing. Yet there he is: without knowing it, without intending it, without planning it, grown.

Physical growth is something that always happens indirectly, invisibly, and mysteriously. Like the lilies of the field, we too are enveloped in a providential arrangement that takes care of growth without our giving it a thought. Doctors have no prescription for it; they know how it may be stunted or stimulated, but the process itself is outside all their knowing—a secret that nature keeps very discreetly to herself. The point is that growth on all levels comes like this, by giving attention to something else.

Move up to the higher level of the mind, to mental growth, the kind of growing that's more exciting than adding inches to our stature—adding new dimensions to the mind. How do our minds grow? Can we force our minds to grow? Do we one day sit down and say to our minds, "Now, you grow, do you hear, and be quick about it"? People who work principally with the mind in the realm of ideas have quite early learned the secret of receptivity, the wonderful process of serendipity. They know that the workings of the mind are mysteriously subtle, that by some odd perversity they get their best ideas when they're not frantically hunting them, and that the surest way to kill a good idea is to force it. You can't grow lilies with ■ bulldozer.

SERENDIPITY

*You can lead a horse to water,
But you cannot make him drink.
You can send your boy to college,
But you cannot make him think.*

The mind will not be coerced or even commanded by the will. It will balk like a stubborn mule when you try to shove it.

Artists, writers and composers of music bear unanimous witness to this—that their best work is done, not when they're shoving it, but when they feel they are caught up in an inspiration and being used by something greater than they are. Listen to them confess how often and for long periods of time their minds lie fallow, inert, dull. No matter how hard they work or what they try to write, the door won't open, the thought won't think, for the mind is a lazy instrument that loves to dawdle and wander like a tramp. It has to be stirred or lured; it can't be shoved. And then quite casually one day comes a moment—call it inspiration, illumination—some exalted moment when a stray thought comes floating in. Out of the shadow land of the outer world or the inner mind it comes, shapeless and unformed, and the door they couldn't batter down seems to open with a magic touch. We've all known moments of inspiration.

Ask the idea-men in industry whose job it is to think up new ideas, "When do you get your best ideas?" "In the bathroom," one said, "shaving." "At night," another said, "when I first lie down." "At church," another said, "when the choir sings."

J. Robert Oppenheimer, after years of research, said, "Insights seem to flourish best when the thinker is apparently wasting time." And Matthew Arnold put it in an unforgettable verse:

THE MYSTERY OF GROWTH

*We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides.
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery the soul resides.
... But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.*

Yet inspiration is no password to heaven for the lazy mind. To say that our best insights come indirectly is not to say that they come haphazardly or drop like manna from heaven into the hands of the lazy. You have to do your homework. Goethe said that the very hardest thinking may not produce thought, but neither will it come unsought. There is no substitute for work. It is rather as that winsome Frenchman Saint Exupery said, "It is true that a sudden illumination may now and then light up a destiny, but illumination is the vision granted at the end of long and gradual preparation. If this evening something is revealed to me, it will be because I shall have carried my heavy stone toward the building of the invisible structure."

How do our minds grow? Very much as lilies do. We can't grow by trying to grow. We make our minds available to the gift; we follow the trail of a fascinating thought; we climb up the stairway of wonder, of curiosity; we set our minds a task too big for them to grasp; we try to do what we can't do; we wrestle with great issues and ideas; and the mind stretches and expands in the process, without knowing that it grows. That's how the mind is made. That's how the world is made. Seek this, and that will follow. You go out like Columbus after a continent and a lot of other continents rise up in your path. Think how the mind of man has been stretched up in the past few centuries as it has followed the Pied Piper of science, and of how many surprises are yet to come

along that path; and think of how the mind of man will be stretched when he follows the trail of the higher truth, the far frontiers of the human soul. God has many things yet to reveal to the inquiring mind of man.

When we come to the highest and holiest place, the human spirit, the principle is essentially the same. How do we grow in grace, in knowledge and love of God, and add new dimensions to our moral, spiritual stature? We need not be reminded that this has become the world's most pressing question—spiritual maturity. Where do we find people wise enough in mind, big enough in soul, grown up enough in vision to match, to handle with moral responsibility the mighty problems of this dangerous time? Not many questions are as important as that.

Can we make ourselves big? Can we by conscious effort and bulldozing aggression shove our way into bigness? No, we get neurotics out of that: Nazis, Hitlers, dictators, little men with proud poses trying to appear big (which is one of the major perils of our time), too many little people trying to be big. Spiritual growth, like all other growth, comes as a by-product, a serendipity, an agreeable something added in reaching up for something else. Here is the great secret of worship in the fullest meaning of the word, and why we Christians believe in it so stubbornly in a world that has almost forgotten the worth of it. For worship is the soul of man reaching up for the greatness which is God.

"Moral education," said Dr. Alfred Whitehead, "is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness." And that's what worship is—the habitual vision of greatness, the time-exposure of the human soul to the highest that we know. We tend inevitably to grow like that to which we give our attention, our admiration, and devotion. In one of the many art galleries of Europe there is an old

Greek statue of Apollo, a beautiful figure of physical perfection. Someone visiting the gallery said he didn't know which was more impressive to him, to look at the statue or to watch the crowd as they looked. Invariably, he said, everyone who stood before it, even for a casual instant, began to straighten up, put back his shoulders, and stand tall—the lifting power of loftiness.

I think that is what the Bible is mostly about from the beginning to end—little people looking up; people very much like ourselves, who one day look up and see a great thing and then become what they see. "I . . . saw the Lord . . .," said Isaiah, "high and lifted up . . ." (6:1). And lured by that loftiness he was lifted—like the boy in the story of the Great Stone Face, who day by day came to bear the image in himself of the face he had looked upon so long. The habitual vision of greatness—that is worship. Thumb through the pages of the New Testament sometime and see how consistently this note is sounded: ". . . be not conformed to this world"—don't let this world squeeze you into its mold—"but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (ROMANS 12:2); ". . . the gift of God is eternal life . . ." (ROMANS 6:23); ". . . by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves. . . . Not of works, lest any man should boast" (EPHESIANS 2:8-9). You cannot shove your way to it; you can only receive it and make your mind available to the gift.

Certainly here is the secret of the grip of Jesus on the souls of men: His sublime belief in the bigness of little men. You see Him sitting down among them on the seashore, on the hillside, pretending not to notice their littleness but pointing them to something beyond their power to perform. He didn't say, "Be good and you'll enter the Kingdom of God"; He said, "Seek God first, His Kingdom, and you'll be good—all these things will be added

unto you." Is there anything our generation needs more than this lifting power of loftiness, the habitual vision of greatness?

I wonder if you've read the late Dorothy Thompson's answer to Frank Lloyd Wright. Mr. Wright was an architect, and an exceptionally good one; but when he sounded off, as he frequently did, on the meaning of life and religion, he was somewhat less than inspired. (If I may risk the pun, he was often more wrong than right.) He once said that public rooms should be only about twelve feet high so that people in them would not have to feel inferior or insignificant.

Dorothy Thompson read that speech and romped all over him. "The G. I. Joes," she said, "whom I saw standing awestruck in the Salisbury Cathedral, or watching the robed procession climb the vast stairs of Canterbury, or kneeling under the lofty arches of Notre Dame, or staring upward at St. Peter's at Michelangelo's immense dome were not feeling insignificant. On the contrary they were realizing that life has a grandeur and a beauty and a significance above and beyond themselves that wakened in them high aspiration. The terrible heresy of our time is that everything must be keyed down to man's understanding, lest he get an inferiority complex. Books must be written in the language of the gutter. The height of inspiration must be put at twelve feet, twice the measure of man; one must not expect him to lift his eyes beyond his own stature.

"This is scientific dribble. Every boy or girl, be he mechanic's child or hod carrier's, wants to be something better than he is and other than the mass. He does not want a ceiling put over his life. Emerson did not advocate a twelve-foot ceiling when he said, 'Hitch your wagon to a star.' He knew the wagon would never reach the star, but it would stay out of the gutter. The height to

which man grows is commensurate with his vision. Set his ceiling at twelve feet and he will eventually be living underground."

Well, here is the glory of the gospel. In a time when everything about us is asking us to look down, Christianity is asking us to look up, to give our devotion to something greater than our little selves. And the glory of Christ is that He put no ceiling over human life. He knew the potential greatness of the human soul. He brings us, one by one, face to face with God, trusting with that huge faith of His that with the touch of God upon us we shall rise to the full stature of our beings when we make ourselves available to His gift.



more human tragedy than can all of us doctors put together."

The misery of being bored! What is boredom? How do people get bored in a world like this? And why is it that men and women will do almost anything to escape the misery of being bored?

Well, the Lord save us from glib answers to profound questions—and this, believe me, is a profound question. It gets us down immediately into the deep and almost unexplored area of emotion where all our gropings are still half-blind. The most powerful drive of life lies in the feelings, the emotions, the affections, in what the Bible calls the heart, and no one can get down into the complex mechanism of the human heart with a knife or a drug or a pair of pliers.

"Out of the heart," says the Bible, "are the issues of life." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . ." (MATTHEW 22:37). And such is the nature of the human heart that it must love something. Its hungers must be fed as the hungers of the body; the affections must be set on something. The strong feelings must have something to lay hold upon, to wrap themselves around, or lacking it leave a hunger as painful in the soul as hunger in the body when it has no solid food. Here, then, in part is the torment of boredom: an emptiness in the soul, a basic human need unanswered, an unfed craving of the heart for some devotion to give life glory and meaning, an exhilaration—or, if you like, a zest for life.

Boredom is the opposite of that. What we're dealing with here is deeper than mere monotony, the drudgery of doing the same thing over until there is no glory there—the postman walking the same beat; the telephone operator putting the same plugs into the same holes at the same switchboard; the mother getting the children off to school at the same hour, washing the same dishes, sweep-

ing the same floors. Granted, there is a measure of boredom in the monotonous and some bit of drudgery in every life.

It's the fashion of novelists to stir our pity with their realistic stories of hard-working people living in tenement flats with nothing to relieve the drabness. They get up tired and drag themselves through the day like old Sisyphus rolling a stone up an unending hill. Albert Camus makes old Sisyphus the symbol of modern life. How drab life is in spots!

But save some of your pity for dwellers in air-conditioned houses. The bored people are not the busy people. They are the empty people, whether busy or not, people with nothing to live for and nothing outside themselves to fix the affections upon—the "hollow men" T. S. Eliot talked about, for whom life is void of meaning. Boredom is just another name for emptiness, largely though not always self-induced emptiness. Health factors and the aging process make exceptions, but for the most part boredom is the penalty of withheld affection, the price we pay for detachment from life participation. It is the curse that life puts in the empty heart that is too lazy to face responsibility or too fearful to give itself in love.

Very early in life we begin to choose between life and death, between being blessed and being bored. The psychologists help us at this point. They talk much about "the regressive fantasy" (or whatever term is in the current vocabulary), that curious, unconscious urge to escape the struggle of life by slipping back into childhood or infancy, or even before it into the prenatal stage. The first thing a baby does is to cry; and that infant cry is regarded as a child's protest against coming into the world and leaving the peaceful shelter of the mother's womb where all wants are satisfied without effort or struggle. The memory of that peaceful prenatal existence

lingers on in the unconscious, so the theory goes, and there is a latent desire all through life to reproduce it, to get back to its effortless, passive paradise. Life in this world is a battle from the cradle to grave and something in us is unwilling to face the hard fight and is forever seeking some prenatal shelter of security in the fantasy of escape.

Don't say the argument is farfetched—whole religions are based on it! One of the world's largest religions is Buddhism, and it is a religion devoted to the process of reducing life to emptiness, nothingness. It locates the root of the suffering in the feelings and desires: we suffer because we desire. We can reduce the suffering by cutting down desire; we can lessen the conflict by cooling down the passions and killing the affections. And if we work patiently enough at it we can come at last to a paradise of perfect peace—nirvana, the nearest the human soul can come to death.

This has an enormous hold on millions of minds, and all the aesthetic religions teach it in one form or another. "Detach yourself from involvement. Narrow down your desires. Hug the safe shores. Tempt not the deeper raptures. Don't believe too much or love too deeply. Don't suffer, don't get hurt." And a great blight has fallen on much of the eastern world by reason of that negative religion. It may shock some of us to discover how much more Buddhist than Christian we are when we make comfort our goal. There is a vast difference between the invigorating religion of Christ that calls to life and the passive religions of the East that move toward peace and death.

Some thoughtful people are wondering now if western civilization—which has been so dynamic, so nourished by an invigorating faith—is not gradually, unconsciously reverting to the ancient concept by another route. The

modern form of seeking nirvana is our frantic search for security, in the dedication of science to personal comfort, in the channeling of all this new control of nature to the end of making life so smooth and riskless and comfortable. Our idea of roughing it, as someone said, is turning the electric-blanket dial down to low. How can we take the risks out of life, make it smooth and comfortable, and escape the penalty of boredom? The answer is: we can not. The sense of futility is increasing in western life; we are beginning, too, to suffer from nothingness. Many young people are world-weary, have too much—"Fed up at fifteen, fagged out at forty."

A man said to his doctor, "I have everything, Doc, and I have nothing. I have a lovely home with a swimming pool, two cars in the garage—both Cadillacs. I've done everything there is to do. I have everything a man could wish for except the ability to wish for anything. I've reached the place, Doc, where I just don't give a damn." We should not be surprised with that. It is a perfect formula for boredom: to have everything one can wish for except the zest to wish for anything; to come to the banquet table of life without an appetite; to reach the nirvana of perfect comfort and find there utter emptiness. And you can do it; you can make your own nirvana, even without the Cadillacs; right there in your own day-by-day choices you can make your own nothingness. Just withhold your affection, narrow down your interests, dodge responsibility, protect yourself against the hurts, and you can get down to emptiness, zero, nothing there but yourself.

When we turn from the cause of the sickness to some of the proffered cures, the darkness of boredom deepens. Forgive me if I have to go deeper into the negative, but that is where life for millions has gone. When we lack a

zest for life we have to find it in something. Actually there is no such thing as emptiness. Nature, we say, abhors a vacuum. Empty a glass of water and air will immediately rush in. Emptiness is so intolerable, it is impossible. Nature won't permit it. That is why Jesus told the story of the empty house. Nothing can remain empty, least of all the human heart. Its hungers must be fed; the affections must be set on something. And it is right here that the darkness of the bored soul deepens. Lacking the real zest of life, men turn to all sorts of artificial substitutes to fill the vacuum where the soul should be.

We know now—when we get behind the question of why men become heavy drinkers, drug addicts, delinquents (juvenile or senile)—that it is so often the story of the empty house. “. . . be not drunk with wine,” said Paul, “. . . be filled with the Spirit” (EPHESIANS 5:18). That was sheer insight on his part to link by contrast these two emotional opposites, sensual excitement and spiritual exhilaration, because that is what all stimulants and narcotics are—substitutes for the real, attempts to fill the emptiness or deaden the pain of it or produce by artificial means the illusion of exhilarating life. When we don't have this Spirit, we fill the void with “spirits.” We pounce on life, grab at it, to manufacture the feeling.

There are all kinds of drugs. The mind of man is ingenious in inventing them. Action is often a drug, a narcotic to deaden the pain of thought. Frequently a nervous breakdown is preceded by furious action—business to make the mind forget. Amusement is a pleasant drug to stop the mind from musing; its very name betrays its purpose—A-musing, not musing, not thinking—and millions try to fill the emptiness with it.

With the descent of night on every modern city, great masses of human beings swarm into places of diversion and amusement where for a little while they can escape

and make the mind forget. Of course, a certain measure of diversion is quite essential to relax the strains of life—all work and no play makes Jack a dull fellow, and Jill a dull girl—but today it is all lopsided. Amusement now is big business, the most lucrative business in the world. People pack huge stadiums that promise a thrill of excitement, spend enormous amounts on emotional stimulants—on anything that will tingle the senses, stir the feelings, make them feel alive. Ten thousand dollars a night is considered a modest sum to pay a man who can tickle the senses and make people laugh. If the laughter is not spontaneous, they can clack it in by machinery to storm the feelings with manufactured mirth. If we weren't so used to it, we would think it insanity. Why all this enormous expenditure to fill the time, to kill the time? Because people are so happy? No! Mostly because they are empty and must be filled with something. Meanwhile we discover it is more and more difficult to be amused; even the exciting "shoot-em-ups" get tiresome after a while.

Sometimes a more powerful drug is called for to appease the unquenchable hunger for exhilarated life. A few years ago it would have shocked us to have been told that war gets its rise in part from the torment of boredom. But we know better now. "The Crusades," said Clifton Fadiman, "were stimulated in part by love of God, in part by love of loot, in part by the terrible tedium of daily life." One reason men periodically rise up to follow a madman, a warrior-leader like Hitler, is to escape the emptiness of mediocrity in the exhilaration of a passionate crusade. Hitler knew that. Nihilism was all through Europe, and Hitler knew that people who had quit believing in almost everything were ready to believe in almost anything. As Arnold Nash once put it, the collective emptiness of the European soul was an open invitation

for some passionate idea to move in and fill the vacuum.

One of the real dangers now is that, with no great cause to lift us to our feet, no great God to believe in, no great devotion to set the affections upon, the hunger will turn inward, turn destructive, turn to strife and conflict as some men turn to marijuana, or indeed as some have turned to communism to get the feel of adventure and exhilarating life.

Hot blood flows in the veins of man; strong fires burn within his soul. This is God's gift to him, part of the image of God in him, and it is a kind of sad tribute to the original grandeur of his soul that he would rather fill himself with something that damns him and destroys him than to be filled with nothing. He is so possessed of fire within that he refuses to be mediocre. If he can't be greatly good, he will be greatly evil. If he can't build up, he will blow up and smash the show to bits, as Dostoevski warned long ago. He can't be empty; he must be filled.

And that brings us straight to the torment of boredom and what it really, profoundly means. You would think we would catch on after a while and rejoice in the truth of it—this restless wish, this driving hunger in the heart and what it really means. It takes us straight to the Bible and what it has always tried to tell us about the real nature of our human nature, this curious bit of dust with so much deity in it.

Boredom is good news. It is a proof of our higher heredity. It is the surest sign from the soul itself of its unquenchable hunger for the infinite, what Jesus called "eternal life"—invigorating, enduring, satisfying life. Boredom means that the infinite in us won't let us be satisfied with the finite, with the little baubles we clutch at to fill the soul.

Long years ago a man wrote a book which, though phrased in ancient language, uncannily described the fed-up-ness of our time. His book somehow got into the Bible, though it had a hard time getting there; for in his book this man set out to prove the opposite to what the Bible teaches. He set out to show that life was not worth living, that there was nothing here worth doing; it was all a weary round of nothingness. He had tried it. He had worked hard to gain knowledge, to get pleasure, to acquire wealth, and he succeeded. He got it. But the more he got, the less he wanted it. In spite of all he poured in, the house of his life remained empty. One day he added it up and the total he got was zero. "I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, . . . and, behold, there was vanity . . ."—nothing (ECCLESIASTES 2:11). And then by accident he stumbled on the reason: "God," he said, "has set eternity in the heart." Eternity in the heart! And that's it.

If you want the clue to most of our fed-up-ness, there, at least, is a hint of it. We have set the ceiling too low for our stature. The clear reason why we cannot find lasting satisfaction on this world stage is not that the world is too big for us, as we sometimes fear, but that we are too big for it. The infinite can't be filled with the finite. This sense of futility, melancholy, and world-weariness which the French existentialists are writing about, and which has settled down on the human spirit, is only another proof on a wide scale that modern man, for all his brilliance in some dimensions, has missed the main one. He has tried to live as if he were a child of this world only; he has given his attention, set his affection on the world only and has forgotten to an amazing degree his kinship with the infinite, the one dimension that gives him significance.

The Soviets have made materialism an ideology, the

national goal of a nation. The skies are empty—no God there, nothing above man to give devotion to; and they call it a dynamic society. But they will come to it after a while—the curse of soul-emptiness. There are many evidences that they've already come to it—the penalty of misplaced affection, the ceiling too low for a man to stand up under.

*For those who seek the answer in houses, lands
and rings,
Will some day find that empty lives are just as
empty filled with things.*

The real zest of life comes in the conviction that life has lasting meaning, that what we do here has significance because our lives are linked with the creative purposes of God. That is why the western world must lift its sights again, rediscover the dynamic religion that gave it birth and made it daring, adventurous, and alive.

Translating this into personal terms where day by day we live with common humdrum things, the formula is essentially the same. The zest goes out of life when it has no lasting, compelling interest. What gets weary here is not so much our energy as our interest. Life bores only when it loses interest. The secret of exhilarating life is not hard to find; in fact, it is not a secret. It's a *serendipity*, an agreeable thing not sought for, a gift that comes in the pursuit of something else. You simply set the affections, fall in love with something worthy to be loved, get hold of something big enough to hold you, and the miracle happens in the margin, as something added in the doing of something else.

The Lord never meant any life to be empty or bored for want of interest. There are so many things to fill it, so many things to learn, to know, to be, to do; so many

pathways to the infinite and doorways to the divine. It lies sometimes in very simple paths. Luther Burbank fell in love with plants and his life to the end was filled with never-ending surprises. There's the world of nature, the world of beauty, the world of music—so many pathways to the infinite, satisfactions that have no end.

Of course, the deepest satisfaction is falling in love with people, for the possibilities in people are almost limitless. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell fell in love with people and set his affection on the health of Labrador. He made a speech in a church one night about his early years there, and of course the hardship of his struggle broke through in the words he spoke. After service a woman profusely praised him for his great sacrifice. "Oh," he said, "lady, you completely misunderstood me. I was having the time of my life."

Life can be very exhilarating when you set the affections and lay hold on something that holds you. It doesn't mean you will be happy all the time. Nobody is happy all the time. "Life," said Woodrow Wilson, "isn't all running to a fire. Not everything is exciting." But if we have the consciousness that what we do, however unnoticed, adds up to something with a bit of eternal significance, that it contributes some modest part to some great total God is adding up, life will take on an unexpected luster of glory, zest, and meaning. And we will know again in our own experience the truth in our Lord's great utterance: "Seek you first the Kingdom of God; set your affections there, and all these things will be added, including life—exhilarating, eternal, satisfying life."

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The Roots of Peace

... the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace ... (GALATIANS 5:22).

ONE OF THE DISTURBING MARKS OF OUR TIME IS THE DEVALUATION of words. Great words, once strong and vigorous, are misused, diluted, and emptied of moral meaning.

The late Dr. Halford Luccock, whose genial presence is missed among us more poignantly than we can say, told how once, when he had reached the mature age of eight years, in the normal course of events he became an atheist. Along with some other eight-year-old unbelievers he wanted to do the wickedest thing he could imagine. They decided to burn a Bible—that would be the height of impiety! From the table of his father's study they took a large, leather-bound book and proceeded to a book-burning celebration in the backyard. They were interrupted by the arrival of his father who did the meanest thing possible to spoil the party: his preacher father gently pointed out that what was burning on the fire was not the Bible but the dictionary. So, Dr. Luccock said, the thrill of their heroic impiety was sharply diminished by the knowledge that what they were defying was not the Almighty but merely Noah Webster. Dr. Luccock then went on in his characteristic style to point out the close relationship between the Bible and the dictionary.

From the Bible the dictionary gets much of its major meaning. We cannot throw away the Bible without at the same time shrinking the meaning of many words in it and doing something destructive to the dictionary. This we have seen happen—the devaluation of words. The Soviets have taken the vigorous words of democracy and twisted them; a secular society has taken the great words of the Christian vocabulary—words like “faith,” “hope,” “abundant life”—detached them from their spiritual roots, and cheapened them until they cease to mean what they started out to say in the New Testament.

Consider this great Bible word “peace,” so often heard in the speech of Jesus and reiterated in the writings of the Apostles. The peace of God! See how this once-vigorous word has been cheapened, emptied of its moral meaning, lifted from the depths of life to become limp and lifeless in the shallows. We don’t even know exactly what we mean by it any more.

It is easy to understand why, in our generation, the search for peace has become a major occupation. Ours is an age of unprecedented turbulence: to the outer world of international life we look every day with anxiety, to a world of quarrelsome nations where menace seems to lie in ambush on every continent; in the inner world of the spirit we feel a sense of the sinister. This is indeed “the age of anxiety.” When life gets to be too much, the soul must seek shelter. And it is not surprising that our generation is seeking peace of mind as frantically as the Middle Ages sought salvation.

But the search has been faulted by this shallowness, by a drastic shift in major premise. In 1946 a gifted rabbi wrote a book, *Peace of Mind*. It was avidly read by millions who paid two and a half dollars to get what apparently they did not have. While the book was helpful in many ways, the illusion was on the first page of

it: the accepted assumption that peace of mind is the most important thing in life, the chief good, the end and goal of human existence. The author quotes with approval an ancient poet: "Heap on other men the gift of riches, but give to me the gift of the untroubled heart."

Since then many hearts have been troubled and many minds made unpeaceful about that premise, for this is not the peace of the Bible; this is a great word diluted. This is peace detached from its spiritual origin. Nowhere in the Bible is peace put first as the chief good, the end and goal of existence. Always, everywhere in the Bible, peace is the fruit, the consequence of something, never an end in itself to be pursued for its own sake. Peace in its essential nature is a by-product, a *serendipity*, an *agreeable thing not sought for*, a gift of grace that comes by indirection in the pursuit of something deeper. Peace is the fruit of something. "The fruit of the Spirit is peace."

It is important to mark this difference because it is part of the shallowness of our time to look for fruits without the roots, to take the benefits of religion without religion, to get the gifts of God without the need of God. But the peace of God is always the fruit of something.

For one thing, and the first thing, *peace is the fruit of reconciliation*, rightness in the heart. "Therefore," said Paul, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God . . ." (ROMANS 5:1). This is first, both in sequence and importance. There can be no peace of mind until there is peace with God. It is the profound wisdom of the Bible to go to the heart of man's predicament, to locate his maladjustment in his estrangement. In the heart of every human being, whether he lives on Main Street, U.S.A., or in the jungle of the Amazon, there lurks a vague uneasiness, a sense of inner wrongness, and a built-in hunger for rightness. This is the badge of man's

creaturehood: uneasiness in the heart, sometimes called "the sense of guilt." And there is no use sweeping it under the rug or taking it to the seashore or the mountains in some Shangri-la of forgetfulness. The uneasiness is within.

At the entrance to Cypress Gardens, Florida, is this inscription:

*If you would have a mind at peace,
A heart that cannot harden,
Go find a door that opens wide
Upon a lovely garden.*

The sentiment is beautiful and there is great restfulness in beauty. But the people who swarm there and swing open those gates don't give the impression that they have found the door to inner peace. The uneasiness is within.

At no point is the shallowness of our age more apparent than in its proposed solutions to that uneasiness, that sense of guilt in the human heart. Jauntily it has dismissed the whole idea of guilt, forgiveness, conscience, and moral responsibility; it has turned from the great depths—the wisdom of the Hebrew prophets, the realism of Shakespeare, the message of redemption in the New Testament—to seek solutions in surface panaceas, in the rearrangement of attitudes and manipulation of emotions. Our age has been characterized by the invention of innumerable devices to make us feel good without being good, to banish evil without quitting it, to get peace of mind, if not without money at least without moral price—in other words, to get the gifts of God without the need of God.

Much of our modern psychology is badly faulted at this point. We have accepted the idea of "adjustment"; this is the new gospel, and it is a long way from the insight of the New Testament. It encourages people to accept their sins rather than face them and rise above

them. It provides alibis for failure by reducing the severity of conscience that would lead us to correct them.

There is a research specialist at the University of Illinois who has taken the trouble to write a book on the sense of guilt in men and women that now brings them more to clinics than to churches; this uneasiness in the soul that so often ties people up in knots and drives them into all sorts of neurotic behavior. Contrary to the Freudian concept, this man regards the sense of guilt as a divine gift to man, the mark of his moral responsibility that should never be snubbed or lightly dealt with. He believes people who are disturbed about themselves are not disturbed for nothing, and the reason they feel guilty is, at least quite often, because they are. It's a wound in the moral dignity of man to be told that he must adjust and accept in himself what is unacceptable to his own innate sense of rightness. This book is mostly a complaint against certain of its author's colleagues who are inclined to deal with symptoms only, to keep their patients "symptom-free." Go to them with a sense of guilt and they will counsel you to get rid of the guilt feelings! This man has the courage to say what the Bible says: that, nine times out of ten, what we need to get rid of is the guilt.

This is an area in which I am not too qualified to speak—I leave it to the experts. I cite it only to illustrate the shallow, secular tendency to heal the hurt of people lightly, to say, as the false prophets of Jeremiah's day, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Altogether too many people are trying to get adjusted when they need to be converted. They are having their sins explained or explained away when they need to have them forgiven. The Bible starts with God's wonderful forgiveness: "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 JOHN 1:9). No peace is promised to the transgressor. How can we have peace when there is conflict in the heart? There is no radiance without rightness, no peace of mind until there is first peace with God. It can't be bought or bargained for; it's a by-product, a gift of God, His acceptance and forgiveness. Pray, then, not for peace; pray first for rightness in the heart, and the peace of God will follow. It was when the prodigal son went home and got things right with his father that the "lights went on in his father's house and they began to be merry." Peace is a fruit of reconciliation—rightness in the heart.

Second, *peace is the fruit of responsibility*, the result of facing, not fleeing, the risks and tasks of life. It is important to mark that difference. ". . . my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth . . ." (JOHN 14:27). When Jesus said that, He was not speaking from any ivory tower of detachment. It was in the upper room that He said it, on the night before the cross, when He was carrying in His soul the burden of mankind. That is a long way from the popular, shallow notion that peace is passive, a refuge from the risks, a detachment from the tasks.

*I wish I wuz a little rock
A-settin' on a hill,
I wouldn't do a single thing
But jes' keep settin' still.*

I suppose that is the most common notion of inner peace—tranquillity, total security, absence of tension, the blue heaven of an unruffled, untroubled life. And it can never be, not in this world. The very conditions that make life possible on this planet make that kind of peace impossible. Here in this risky world there is no such thing

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as total security or an absence of tension. The very key to life is tension, the clash of opposites, the pull of one force against another. The only reason you can sit still anywhere, on a hill or in a church, is tension—the pull of the earth offsetting the conflicting pull of the sun.

To be sure, there are false tensions—man-made, artificial, neurotic tensions—which by prayer and mental discipline and relaxation we can and should reduce. Life is full of needless tensions that tear it to pieces. But to pray for peace—meaning refuge from the risks, release from responsibility, relaxation of the tension between what is and what ought to be—is to look for a Buddhist paradise and ask for the peace and quietude of death.

Immanuel Kant wrote a book entitled *Perpetual Peace*. He took the title from a sign in a cemetery and wrote the book to inquire whether the kind of peace millions in the world are looking for in the “escape” religions can be found anywhere except in the cemetery. The answer of the book was “no.” There is no peace in escape, in withdrawal or retreat from the risks and responsibilities of life. Certainly the peace of God is not designed to leave us infants or dampen down the fires that make us human.

In fact, there are times and conditions when peace of mind is positively sinful. No decent person would want it, and ought not to have it. To be preoccupied with yourself, to have an untroubled heart in this world in the midst of its wrongs and needs, to withdraw from the responsibility of bearing some share of its burden, is to fail the very purpose of being human.

I was scheduled to speak one night to a group of laymen, good fellows all of them, Christian business men. To tune them up for the address to come (I suppose, to fortify them against falling asleep), a song leader led them in singing a singable gospel song with an atrocious theology. They threw back their heads and sang it lustily:

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*I've anchored my soul in the haven of rest,
I'll sail the wild seas no more.*

The Lord forgive me, when it came my time to speak I threw a wet blanket on the whole deal. I asked them to examine the foolishness they had been vigorously singing; for they were Christian men, not looking for harbors of rest or refuge from responsibility. They were followers of Him who had called them to take it up, and whatever peace was possible in their lives would have to come out of that—in the conflict, not apart from it.

Can you imagine Jesus standing in a pulpit, preaching contentment and tranquillity in a world and a time like this? If it is the first aim of religion (as some think it should be) to provide peace of mind, then Karl Marx was right: "Religion is the opiate of the people." Let's put it down clearly: Christianity is a call to life, not death. It is definitely not designed to keep us peaceful, happy, and content.

G. K. Chesterton once made a vigorous criticism of the church in its tendency to soften the call to heroic action. He said, "The peace promised in the churches is less attractive to the human spirit than the war that is promised outside. For one man who wants to be comforted, there are a hundred who want to be stirred. For what men want in the last resort is not death but drums." Drums! This is the gift of the gospel—drums! "Follow me," He said. "Take up the task. Take up the cross." And wherever the Christian note is authentically sounded, it speaks on this wise: "Pray not for peace. Pray for power to take up the task. Let any man commit himself to God's will, let him aim by God's strength to do it, and God will give him peace, deep, satisfying peace within."

"Peace," said Paul, "that passeth all understanding." I suppose one reason he called it that is because it is so

different from our common understanding. It is the peace that comes not by detachment, but by involvement; it is the fruit, the consequence of moral responsibility.

Now let me repeat: the peace of God as promised in the Bible is never put first—never. It is always the fruit, the result of seeking something else. First, *reconciliation* with God; second, *responsibility* to a task; and finally, *righteousness* in human relations. *Peace is the fruit of righteousness.* And in this final point we are moving from the personal to the social, from peace in the heart to peace in the world. "Peace on earth, goodwill to men." World peace! How does it come? Will it ever come?

I have a friend who keeps saying, "The roots of peace are deeper than our statesmen seem to know." That is, we have the dream of peace and in our hearts the deep, deep wish for it, but the roots of it are always deeper than we seem to know.

Recently I made an interesting discovery. I went through the Old Testament with the aid of a concordance and discovered that the word "peace," in the sense of human relations, appears about two hundred times, and that the word "righteousness" appears just about as often. The striking thing is to see how often they are linked together. ". . . righteousness and peace," the Psalmist said, "have kissed each other" (85:10). Consistently through the Bible they are linked together as though they could never be divorced or separately pronounced. In the Book of Hebrews, Christ is proclaimed as being *first* "the King of righteousness" and *after that* "The King of peace." Is this the secret men have missed, the deep root that statesmen never seem to know? Righteousness first—after that, peace.

I know we're in an area where glib words are impertinent, and no minister would want to piously over-

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simplify a problem which earnest men have struggled with and prayed about to find solutions. Peace on earth is no simple thing. But what we are confronted with in the Bible is not good advice to men, but the revelation of God's will for human life. At least the formula is clear: seek first righteousness, and after that, peace. The frustrations come in reversing the order, in wanting peace without righteousness, the gift of God without the will of God.

After all, there is no particular virtue in wanting peace, hating war, and not wanting to be killed. Everyone wants peace. Hitler wanted it, you remember, and he promised his Nazis a thousand years of it. Japan went to war, they claimed, to get peace. The Soviets want peace—if they can get it on their terms. Three times the man with an umbrella flew to Munich to bargain with a bandit to get “peace in our time” while the cynics made a rhyme of it:

*If at first you don't concede,
Fly, fly again.*

Someone said Teddy Roosevelt was always in favor of peace, provided it didn't interfere with the fighting. Everyone wants peace. It is the price of peace we're not prepared to pay. The price of peace is righteousness. It is much easier to hate war than it is to recognize and hate in ourselves the attitude and sins that make for war. Want an illustration? It could be illustrated by a thousand incidents in history. Just take this one.

Lincoln Steffens in his autobiography described a dramatic moment at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 where Clemenceau, the Premier of France, actually insulted Woodrow Wilson, lost his temper, and said, “You talk like Jesus Christ!” Then he confronted the heads of state with a startling question: “Gentlemen,” he said, “I

have heard much talk here about a permanent peace. You say you want a peace to end all wars. I would like to know whether you mean that." He turned to Mr. Wilson, to Lloyd George, and to Orlando of Italy, and asked them bluntly if they really wanted permanent peace. When they nodded their heads, indicating that of course they did, Clemenceau began to list the cost of it. "If we want to give up war," he said, "we must give up our empires. You, Mr. Lloyd George, will have to come up out of India. We French will have to come out of North Africa. And you Americans, Mr. President, will have to relinquish your dollar rights in the Philippines, Mexico and Cuba. We the dominant powers will have to give up our empires, tear down our tariff walls, free our colonies, and open up the world." The nonplussed heads of state looked at each other and quickly informed him that this was not exactly what they had in mind, at least not now and not that much. Then the Tiger of France sat up straight as a poker, banged his fist on the table, and said, "Then you don't mean peace, you want war," not knowing how prophetic were his words.

Righteousness first; after that, peace. Will we ever learn it? Will it ever come? It must be a great burden on the heart of God to listen to the prayers for peace prayed by people who will not walk in the ways of peace. How can God give peace to a world of men who will not walk in His way, who will not limit their greed, their pride, their prejudice, their passion, and follow the things that make for peace? God can't save us from war except as He saves us from our sins. This is the message of the Bible, Old Testament and New.

As we move deeper into the nuclear age when peace hangs by a very slender thread, when the nations suddenly thrust into new proximity are struggling to work out some form of unity, how much we need now the

insight of the Bible. First, righteousness in human relations—after that, peace. Never in history has the world needed so much to hear the words of Jesus: “. . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [shall we say, ‘including peace’?] shall be added unto you” (MATTHEW 6:33).

The Reach for Greatness

... whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased;
and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (LUKE
14:11).

ONE DAY JESUS WAS THE INVITED GUEST OF HONOR IN THE home of a wealthy Pharisee. All sorts of people invited Him to their homes; while He ate with publicans and sinners, He was also at home and moved freely with the well-to-do and respected. Some were devoted to Him and wanted to honor Him; others merely wanted to honor themselves by entertaining a Man of Distinction, which, as someone said, is mediocrity's tribute to greatness.

The dinner was attended by other prominent persons: lawyers, teachers in the law, ranking officials. Jesus had often watched with quiet amusement the sly scheming of the leaders to promote themselves. He noticed that they loved the chief seats in the synagogue and places of prominence at public functions. And what He had witnessed elsewhere was repeated here. When the servants summoned the guests to dinner, there was an unseemly rush toward the tables—not for food, to be sure (they were too cultured for that), but for position at the table, the chief seats. In Eastern lands hospitality was regarded as the most prized social virtue; and the Talmud set

down clear rules for its procedure. Protocol—who comes ahead of whom—was no minor matter in oriental etiquette. The rule was that the uppermost seat was reserved for the most worthy guest; he reclined on the left, the next worthy on the right, the host between, and so on down to the last and least worthy.

The difficulty rose in the designation of importance: who is most worthy, and who determines it? On formal occasions, where the seating order was prearranged by the host, there was no problem. But in informal affairs, where every man was on his own to assess his worth and standing among his fellows, there was a certain quality in human nature which was likely to make for embarrassment. And it did. Jesus watched the sly elbowings for advantage; all done with cautious courtesy, of course, yet each guest maneuvering his way ahead of others to secure for himself the high place at the table to which he thought he was entitled.

When the host was finally seated, he was embarrassed to discover that his Guest of Honor had apparently lost out in the scramble. Instead of being next to him in the chief seat, there He was in the lowest place while a self-important gentleman was complacently reclining in the seat of honor. There was a moment of awkward silence until the fitness of things was restored. The embarrassed host was obliged to rearrange the seating, to ask the affable gentleman on the left to make room—vacate, go down—while to the modest Man at the foot the host said, "Excuse me, my Friend. Come higher. You belong here."

So simple an occurrence Jesus used as a parable of eternal truth. This story is in the gospel because it hints at much more than a lesson in table manners. It is a human parable of a divine law which Jesus was quick to proclaim. He looked at the man whose overeagerness to be at the top ended with his being at the bottom; and He

said, in effect, "Life is like that." There is a fitness of things in the spiritual order in which life finds its true level. People who refuse to be humble are invariably humiliated: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (LUKE 18:14.) It was a clear flash of divine truth on a familiar, human problem.

We have all had enough experience in the gentle art of self-promotion to recognize the relevance of the parable. I have a friend who thinks that if all the automobiles in the United States were lined up bumper to bumper, two hundred and fifty thousand miles of them, ninety-three percent of their drivers would immediately pull out to pass. And we can well believe that, in a world where at least two nations are frantically racing to beat each other to a front seat on the moon. Who will be first? Who comes ahead of whom? The question is still timely.

What we are confronted with in this parable is the paradox again: the "greatness and the littleness" of man, that strange twist in human nature which so often takes its own rich assets and turns them into liabilities; and how in so many areas, by taking the wrong means to right ends, we lose the ends we reach for.

Deep in all of us is the desire for importance, a reaching up for the greatness with which we were originally endowed. Alfred Adler, one of the fathers of modern psychiatry, set this down as the dominant impulse of human life. Every human being is born with an instinctive wish to excel, to be significant, to be esteemed, to be superior. Apparently there is no way we can rid ourselves of this desire. It is part of our native, built-in equipment, the driving force of the self, and should be a considerable asset.

It's all very well for medieval theology to rebuke pride as one of the seven deadly sins (which of course it is;

perhaps the most corrupting of all the sins), but pride has a double meaning. There's another side to the paradox. What would life be without the invigorating pride of self-respect, the ambition to be superior, the desire to excel? One of the principal doctrines of the Christian faith has to do with the dignity of the individual, the importance of the person. And Jesus, far from repressing the hunger in man for greatness, taught His disciples to reach for it—for true greatness. He spent a good deal of his time teaching timid people, who felt they didn't count for anything, that in the sight of God they were supremely, eternally, important. Never equate what the Bible calls meekness and humility with self-abasement and timidity. Man was created for greatness within his finite limitations. His discontent with being nothing, nobody, is the stirring of God's Spirit in his soul.

The sin lies not in our hunger for importance, but in the shabby, pathetic ways in which we reach for it. The hunger must find an outlet somewhere; if not on a high level, then on a low. And in this parable we get a snapshot-glimpse of some of the self-defeating ways in which men clamorously push for it, shoving others out of the way to get it, seeking the appearance of importance without possessing the reality. There are so many wrong ways of reaching for right ends. We've become reasonably familiar with some of them—the many masks the soul wears, the pretenses and devices by which, in our search for glory, we scramble for chief seats at the table of life.

Faultfinding is one. Unkind criticism of others is invariably a cover for mediocrity, a backhanded bid for self-promotion. If we can't push ourselves ahead, we can achieve something of the same result by pulling the other fellow back. We have a disconcerting tendency to do that, to talk down what we're not big not enough to be

and belittle what we feel inferior to. Most of our envious faultfinding is an unconscious scramble for chief seats, a disguised attempt to exalt ourselves by devaluating others, to heighten our own stature by lowering theirs.

We seldom succeed in it, because the mask is too thin and the motive too obvious. Most people see through the deception and recognize the motive. For example, when a retired army general sits down to write his memoirs, sets out to correct history, and explains the humiliating defeats in the war by pinning responsibility where it belongs—that is, on the stupidity of other generals—nobody is fooled by the gesture. We're all sufficiently skilled in that technique ourselves to recognize that he is just baby-sitting with his vanity, jostling for position among the great by diminishing the glory of his competitors. It seldom works. We can never build ourselves up by pulling other people down. Life never says to the jealous, the envious, the critical, "Friend, come up higher." The reverse is true: he that exalteth himself by low-grading other people invariably ends up in a lower seat at the table.

Another common device in the scramble for chief seats is the self-inflation of the boastful. Nature, someone said, is very wise: in making a man's body, nature put his hands in front to make it extremely awkward for him to pat himself on the back. Yet he somehow manages to do it; in a thousand subtle ways he centers himself in the spotlight, puts his ego on exhibition, marches his accomplishments up and down through the conversation—"I, I, I,"—until you feel you are being conducted on a personal tour through the treasure room of his triumphs. How often the finest people spoil the finest things they do with an overeagerness for credit, for recognition, and by trying to promote themselves by applauding themselves.

Remember the classic story of the frog who wanted to

come to Florida for the winter. He had no means of transportation, but he had two friends in the goose family who were well equipped for air flight. The frog secured a piece of stout string and persuaded each of his geese friends to take an end while he, with his strong jaws, seized the string in the middle. It was a pleasant flight and was proceeding well until a spectator on the ground below looked up and, moved with astonished admiration, said, "Who in the world invented that idea?" The poor frog, unable to restrain the impulse to take full credit for the performance, opened his mouth to say, "I." And the spectator had frog's legs for breakfast! We are all more or less afflicted with this kind of "I" trouble. But we have learned in some measure that "pride goeth before a fall," and that the attempt to exalt ourselves by the process of self-congratulation is self-defeating—it doesn't work. Dean Inge, in a classic bit of understatement, said, "The person who seems to be perpetually complimenting himself on being what he is, without any visible ground for his extreme satisfaction, puts those who associate with him into an uncharitable state of mind"—which is an Englishman's way of saying it doesn't work. People don't listen long to the trumpets of the proud. Life never says to the exhibitionist, the show-off, the boastful, "Friend, come higher." When we try to exalt ourselves by applauding ourselves, we are insuring for ourselves a lower place at the table.

It is capable of being ruthless, this magnification of the self, this maneuvering for chief seats. When the striving for recognition becomes uppermost it distorts all other values. It becomes an obsession, an inner anxiety, a deep sickness in the soul. Psychiatrists tell us that one of the ruling motives in mental illness is this obsessive desire to free oneself from the torment of inferiority. Criminologists have learned to look for this motive in the

murderer, the gangster, the juvenile delinquent—this pathological desire of a little man to be a “big shot.” He gets a feeling of importance, a perverted sense of magnitude in being feared by everybody. With a gun in his hand he is God Almighty. Take away his gun, and he’s a poor, frightened, little cry-baby. In how many misshapen forms does this rich asset in man turn to his humiliation!

Much that is ugly and vicious now in the relationships of men has its sinister root in this powerful urge for pre-eminence. We know that the strong appeal of so many of the fascist orders—brown shirts, black shirts, our own Ku Klux white shirts—is in this motive. The basis upon which they have built their tottering structures is a hunger in empty, spiritually-starved people for significance. Apparently the more insecure one feels his own social standing to be, the more he feels he must buttress his self-esteem by looking down his nose at some group to whom he can feel superior. So, all over the world now we’ve had a rash of fictitious superiorities, little people lining up with large movements to lord it over others, feeding their little vanities by feeling superior to other people. In all the varied forms of man’s exploitation of man, the ruling motive is a desire for importance.

T. S. Eliot said in his play *The Cocktail Party*:

*Half of the harm that is done in this world
Is due to people who want to feel important.
They don't mean to do harm—but the harm does
not interest them.
Or they do not see it, or they justify it
Because they are absorbed in the endless struggle
To think well of themselves.*

How petty and small these self-defeating ways of self-promotion seem when we bring them up into the

presence of Christ! Our ideas of greatness and His ideas of greatness are strangely incompatible. To Him the first mark of superiority was the opposite of self-promotion—humility: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The great people are the humble. Before you reject the paradox, consider how much the thoughts of men have come over to this point of view. This insight of His about the proud and the humble, so incredible in that age of despotic might, has through the intervening centuries to a considerable degree become the common sense of mankind. Humility was not a virtue in pagan civilization; it was a servile attitude, demanded only of slaves. But we have come around to appraising men pretty much by this principle now. Generally speaking, we do not admire the proud and arrogant who, with their pseudogreatness, lord it over others. We no longer stand in awe before the pomp and pageantry of kings, as once men did; nor are we impressed with pompous people who, through outward show of power and vulgar display of wealth, elbow their haughty way to the chief seats. We have come at least to admire humility and modesty, even though we may not personally possess it.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, in his autobiography, tells how on a Sunday morning John D. Rockefeller, Jr., came to church a bit later than usual, after the service had begun, and seeing the crowded nave, said to the usher, “I won’t go to my regular pew this morning. I may disturb the service. I’ll find a seat in the balcony.” Whereupon an aggressive, pompous stranger, not recognizing Mr. Rockefeller, said to the usher, “Show me. I’ll take a seat downstairs. I’m not the balcony type.” So, even church ushers are confronted at times with living demonstrations of a principle stated so long ago: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. He that exalteth himself shall be abased.” The great people are the humble.

Deeper, however, than the surface matter of social amenities is the more profound matter of freeing the self from self-centeredness. The second mark of greatness, as Jesus made clear, is self-effacement—not abasement, but effacement, getting the clamorous self out of the center. As long as a person is preoccupied with himself, forever nursing his ego, guarding his reputation, pushing and shoving for recognition and prestige, he is living in slavery to the greatest of all tyrants—self. And all his studied efforts to seem important will disappoint him. In the process of seeking importance, he will lose it. The more he tries to make an impression, the less impressive he is. Those who are most eager for applause seem to get it the least.

The secret of superiority is forgetting the self—getting the self out of the center and putting something superior there. In other words, like all major spiritual ends, human greatness—what there is of it—is a sort of by-product, a *serendipity, attained not by directly seeking it nor by promoting the self, but by losing, forgetting the self*. All the superior people I know are astonishingly careless about seeming superior. They don't even know that they are superior. They lose themselves, forget themselves in what to them is supremely important. Whether or not they appear important seems not to matter. They're human enough to appreciate appreciation, but they don't seek it. When life comes saying, "Come up higher," they seem taken by surprise. This is the essence of true humility: deliverance from the enslavement of the self.

Here, then, are some marks of greatness which Jesus made unmistakably clear: humility, self-effacement, and finally, service. The great people are the serving people. Perhaps the most revolutionary utterance of Jesus is this: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." (MATT. 23:11) We are so familiar with the sound of it

that we haven't grasped the sense of it. See how it speaks to both the proud and the humble. To the proud and privileged people it comes saying, "Your privilege doesn't make you great. It only gives you an opportunity to be great. You must use your wealth and power and privilege in useful service to mankind." This is greatness—power dedicated to service. Sometimes it seems we are just beginning to grasp the depth of that.

To the humble people it comes with a great encouragement. It means that some measure of greatness is within the reach of everyone, the lowest and the least. Not all of us can be privileged, but everyone can serve a great purpose. We could multiply illustrations of humble people who in themselves were unimportant, but identified themselves with God's great purpose; and by linking their lives with greatness, they were lifted into greatness.

For long generations to come, our descendants and their descendants will be mulling over this saying of Jesus, seeing deeper into the depth of it. Far in advance of His time, and of ours, Jesus proclaimed the great law of life, the eternal fitness of things. And then He went on in His own life and death and resurrection to demonstrate it. He Himself is the supreme illustration of the law.

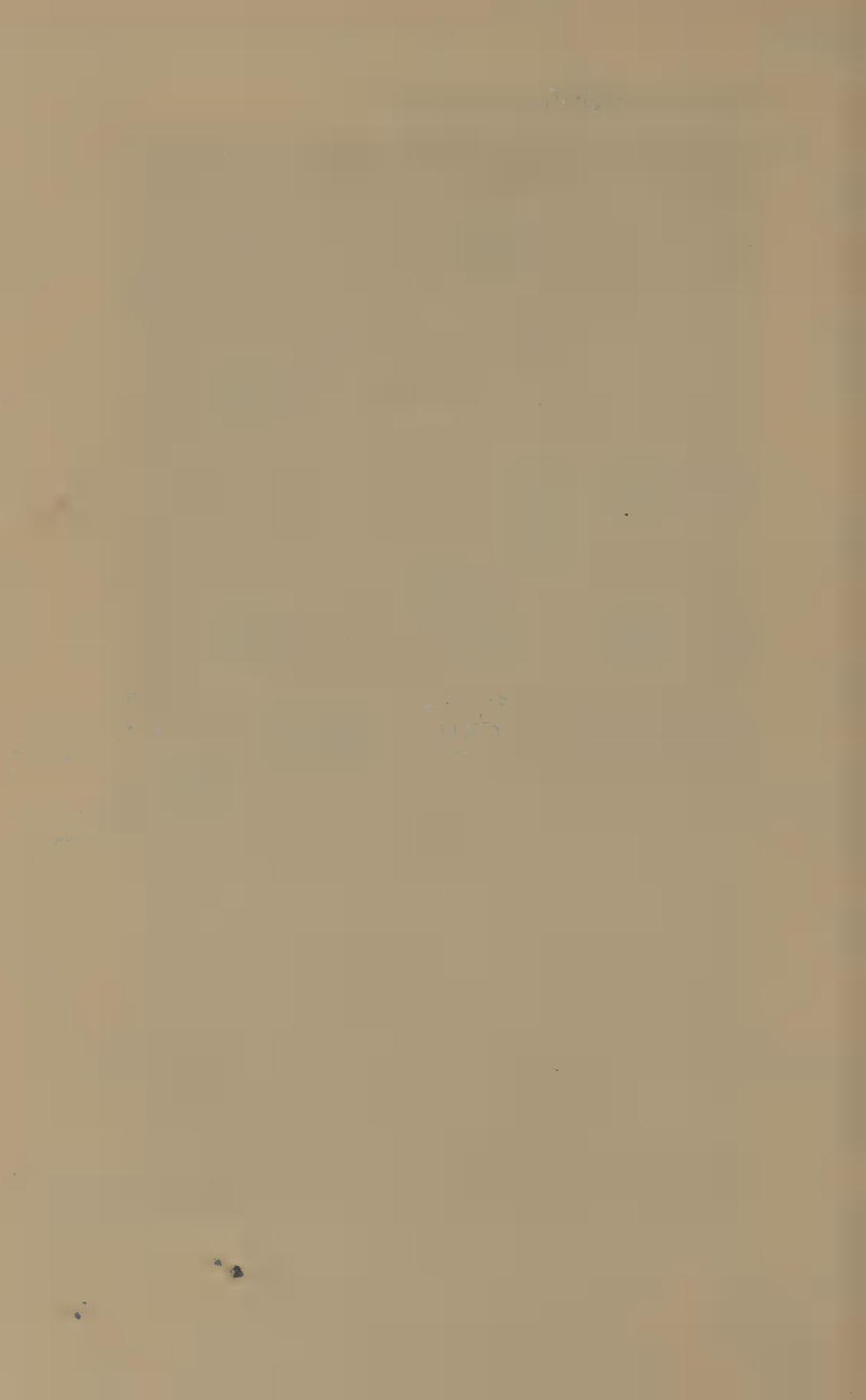
That Jesus should be considered great or even numbered among the great is the supreme miracle of history: that He, born so low, should rise so high. The whole drama of His life, from birth to crucifixion and beyond it, is an unforgettable picture of living lowliness, a revelation in time of the eternal humility of God. How incredible that God should come to man as a Servant, and take the lowest seat, to be despised and rejected of men! This is the infinite mystery of the Incarnation.

One of our Christian leaders, visiting in China, asked a group of Chinese pastors what it was in Christ that appealed most to them and won their hearts to Him. None

of them mentioned the miracles, or even the Sermon on the Mount. One of the elders in a faltering, choking voice told the story of the upper room—Christ washing His disciples' feet. After supper He took a towel and a basin of water, and did that unbelievable thing, becoming a Servant of His servants. And in that lowly deed, far more than any word could do, He rebuked our shabby scrambling for chief seats, the pathetic ways in which we seek the appearance of importance without possessing the reality.

It's little wonder that Paul broke out in poetry about it: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ . . . Who, being in the form of God . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, . . . humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, . . . And every tongue should confess . . . to the glory of God the Father" (PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11).

Let this mind be in you! We're a million miles from it yet, but to this kind of greatness all the future belongs.





The Touch of Influence

And Jesus said, Who touched me? (LUKE 8:45).

JESUS WAS ALWAYS BEING INTERRUPTED—YOU’VE NOTICED that. One could almost write a Life of Christ in terms of interruptions. People broke in on His rest, on His teaching, on His program; and His ministry was filled with things not scheduled on the program. He started out one day to teach the people who thronged around Him, and as usual He was interrupted. A man clutched His arm with quiet desperation—his little girl was sick, lying at the point of death. Would He come? And He went. The crowd tagged along, followed through the narrow street, and then another interruption—a woman, sick, timid, and trembling, reached out her hand to touch the fringe of His garment, drew back, and disappeared in the crowd, or tried to. But He, always sensitive to the pressure of human need, stopped, turned, and said, “Who touched me?”

It is one of those numerous stories which carry the idea quite common in the ancient world that there is healing in the touch of a person. Blind men would stand for hours on the roadside waiting to touch the robe of a holy man. Even the stolid Romans who hadn't much use for holy men lived in mystical dread of any garment worn by a prophet of the gods. One of the most inspirational

books of the century, *The Robe* by Lloyd Douglas, was written around that old, old idea that the robe of a holy man had magic power to heal or harm.

While the idea itself in the mind of the woman who pressed through the crowd to touch Him was at least half superstition (though mixed, as He said, with faith), it also suggests a fact that is not superstition. All of us have been helped or hurt or healed by a touch. On a Sunday, when both custom and the calendar turn our thoughts toward home life—the ministry of motherhood, the unity of the family, the gentle influence of the home—let us ask the question Jesus asked in a crowd long, long ago: “Who touched me?”

It is a question that reaches far. We have all come to maturity in a crowd, and many, many are the influences that have touched our lives. Some of these influences are so remote, so obscure, so far back in the past that we can't even trace them. Someone said, “Every person is an omnibus in which all his ancestors are riding.” Figure it out some time. Each of us inherited something from our parents. *They* touched us. But each of our parents had two parents: that's four; and they each had two: that's eight. Go back to the tenth generation, and each of us had a thousand and twenty-four parent-people; and in the twentieth generation—hold your breath now—one million forty-eight thousand five hundred and seventy-six! Who touched me? *They* touched me, a million far-off ancestors touched me. And they were not all saints back there. Ghost men and women out of yesterday are silently living in the house we walk around in now.

A British scientist, studying the effect of atmosphere on human beings, says that the nitrogen molecules we inhale and exhale in every breath are spread evenly throughout the whole envelope of atmosphere within a few years. So he said that every person who ever lived on earth shares

THE TOUCH OF INFLUENCE

with every other person who ever lived, at least two molecules of nitrogen. We breathe the air that Shakespeare breathed; more than that, we think the thoughts that Shakespeare thought. So interwoven is the web of human life that we think the thoughts men thought centuries ago. We can't separate our minds from all the minds of the earth.

Heredity is the time-binder, the touch of the past on the present that links us to the future. It is a something in the blood, in the bone, in the mind. No one can tell what may show up. A child may skip two generations and come up with a reassortment of great-grandfather and Aunt Matilda. Heredity is red hair in a great-grandchild. It's a mole on the cheek. It's a way of laughing or walking or talking. It may be an unexpected spark of genius out of yesterday, or an ear for music, or an eye for beauty, or some realignment out of the remote past that we can't trace anywhere.

Experts put it in charts, genes, chromosomes, predictable and unpredictable; but we lay people see it better in a picture. Richard Rolle, the Irish poet, put it this way:

*The limbs that move, the eyes that see,
These are not entirely me;
Dead men and women helped to shape
The mold which I do not escape;
The words I speak, my written line,
These are not uniquely mine.
For in my heart and in my will
Old ancestors are warring still,
Celt, Roman, Saxon, and all the dead
From whose rich blood my veins are fed,
In aspect, gesture, voices, tone,
Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone;
In fields they tilled, I plow the sod,*

SERENDIPITY

*I walk the mountain paths they trod;
And round my daily steps arise
The good and bad of the centuries.*

Who touched me? The people who have lived before have touched me in what they were, in what they said, in what they did, in the institutions they built, in the inventions they created. The man who made an organ touched me. The men who wrote the hymns we sing touched me. The Apostle Paul has touched me; Martin Luther, John Wesley have touched me. All that past is in me today; it includes all of yesterday. Out of the great crowd of the past has come a touch on all our lives.

Subtle, too, and closer (yet still beyond the range of the conscious memory and ability to trace) are the molding forces of early childhood. In all these new sciences of self—sociology, psychology, or soul study—there has come a powerful confirmation of what wise parents have always intuitively known: most adult behavior is child-conditioned. In that lengthened period of infancy (a longer period of helplessness in the human animal than in any other), in those few years the child grows faster and learns more than in any comparable period of its lifetime. How? By the touch of influence, for the most part unconscious influence in the invisible atmosphere of home. "Whether it be for good or evil," said one of our wise bishops, "the education of a child is principally derived from its observation of the actions, words and voices and looks of those with whom it lives." In that period we set up the furniture for our mental house.

One of the most interesting confirmations of psychology is the permanence of life's pattern, the child continued in the man; that is, once an impression has been made, it never lets go, particularly if it is accompanied by an emotional experience of high voltage. It may be put

down deep into the mind and be buried there where by normal ways we can't reach or recall it into consciousness, but it is there—some hurt put in there by the touch of a dominating father, some injustice keenly felt, some feeling of not being loved or wanted, some unwholesome fear of sex instilled there. When in later life the twists become a problem, the therapy is to unravel the pattern patiently, then go back step by step and often into early childhood, even infancy, to find a frightful experience that the conscious mind has forgotten but the deep mind has remembered all too well.

Much of our crime comes out of that, and much of our mental and emotional illness. The twists in adult life are child-conditioned. Who touched me? In those years of my helplessness, who touched me? That is important. The Jesuits say, "Give us a child until he is six and he will be ours for life." The psychoanalyst says that in those first six years the pattern of personality is shaped.

Well, that is why, of course, mothers are important people. "God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers." He put down in every little home a touch of His hand, someone who, by her own pain, has created and therefore loves with a love like His, a love that surpasses all other affection. Who touched John Wesley? His mother touched him—Suzanna Wesley. Who touched Abraham Lincoln? Nancy Hanks touched him. Who touched Nero the monster man? Agrippina, his mother, one of the most monstrous women in history. Who touched Saint Augustine? Monica, his mother. Her biographer said, "She laid her mind upon his mind until he believed in her belief." Those first few years—if only we parents could learn that soon enough!

Sometimes mothers come to a minister with a teen-age problem. He would like to help and sometimes he can; but God made mothers before He made ministers, and

there isn't much a minister can do if mother hasn't or doesn't. Those first few years: the touch of God through parents in early childhood. It is superfluous to counsel parents to teach their children because they do it constantly and unconsciously, every minute of the day. When they speak gently they are teaching. When they speak harshly they are teaching. When they don't speak at all, when they don't know what they are teaching, they are still teaching.

Jim Ellenwood, that fine leader of men in the Y.M.C.A., said that one cold night in winter he saw his father come out of his bedroom where there was no heat, come out in his nightclothes and kneel by a chair in the living room to say his prayers. And, he said, of all the sermons he ever heard on prayer, he was convinced more by that one simple, natural gesture of his father, who wasn't aware that he was touching anyone.

Education? We think it is something formal and chronological (and it is); we think it is a school, classrooms, desks, books, and a teacher writing something on a blackboard. It is that, but infinitely more. Henry Adams wrote a book, *The Education of Henry Adams*. He knew he couldn't explain himself without traveling back through the years, through his memory peopled with a host of men and women, a great crowd of people who turned his footsteps this way or that—something seen in a face, something said that set him thinking. We catch cowardice or courage from people as easily as we catch a cold and often don't know where we caught it.

A western judge was teased by a friend for always assuming a lenient and even benevolent attitude toward any defendant who happened to be a Filipino. At first the judge denied that it was true; at least, he said, he certainly was not aware of it. But as he turned the matter over in his mind, he realized that he did have ■ warm

feeling for Filipinos. He recalled that once when he was a boy he had lost an envelope of money his father had entrusted him to carry to the bank. That night a Filipino workman, dark and dirty, brought the addressed envelope to his home; he had found it in the street. The boy's gratitude toward the dark-skinned man for that unexpected delivery from disgrace had put within him a disposition of appreciation which unconsciously had colored his attitude toward every Filipino for the rest of his life. Who touched me? Where did we get prejudice? Someone touched us. Where did we get faith? Someone touched us.

In a New York City church one Sunday morning a disheveled, unkempt young man slipped into a back seat. He was a student at Columbia University. All night long he had walked the streets of New York, battling with his dark doubts, wondering if there was anything worth going on living for or anything he could believe in. Many a student has gone through that. During the prayers he did not bow his head; instead he looked around the congregation, and across the aisle from him he saw one of his teachers, a professor of science at Columbia, a man with many degrees and academic honors. He knew that man's great mind and spirit and reputation, and there he sat in church with his head bowed. And the thought flashed in the young man's mind: if a man like that can believe in God, surely I can. A burden lifted from his mind. He went out of the church with a feeling of hope and purpose. The professor didn't know that someone in the crowd had touched him; he did not know it for years. But one day a medical missionary came back on a year's furlough from India and the first man the missionary went to see was the professor, now an old man and retired. Sitting in the professor's study he said, "I don't know what it was, sir. I think it was the look in your face, the

fact that you were there. Something in your devotion set things right in my heart."

Who touched me? We should never forget that someone is always backing his wagon up to your door to get some furniture for his life's house.

Now we have come far enough along in this to set down a principle. If education in the school of life is mostly contagion—more caught, as we say, than taught; if we have come to where we are and what we are mostly by the invisible touch of other lives upon our own, is it not clear then that this is the divine plan for life? *God works by indirection* through the invisible force of influence. He works through the human network, and sets the solitary in families; that is, He sets every person down in a network of relationships where he must be some kind of link between the generations and, whether he knows it or not, leave his particular touch on the lives of those around him. No one can escape that circle or tear his influence out of the weave into which his life is woven.

There was a story years ago, later put into a movie, of a civic-minded man who in a very discouraging moment wanted to take his life. His guardian angel wouldn't let him die, but he did grant his wish that he had never been born. Then the man who had never been born went back and revisited his hometown where, of course, nobody knew him, not even his wife or mother, because he had never lived. He found in that small town, about which he had often complained, so many things left undone because he had not been there to do them. Many lives had gone wrong because he had not been there to give them a helping hand over the rough spots. Many bad influences had got going in that town because his influence was not there to prevent them. And he wakened from his awful dream, glad to have been alive in that town and to have had some part in shaping its life.

Who can measure a touch, the touch of one person in a circle? I conducted a mission in a rural community which I soon discovered to be exceptional in the high standard of its cultural interests. Every young person went to college, and would not think of doing anything else. And that community has produced more ministers, college presidents, teachers, judges, and business leaders with high ideals than any other community I have ever been in. The secret? Everyone will tell you that it all goes back several years to the time when some young scholars out of Harvard came there, taught in the school, preached in the church, and so inspired the young people with their love of literature, music, beauty, and God that the climate has been different ever since.

Isn't that what all of us are here for?—to lay our hands on something and make a difference in it? To come into the fellowship of a church, for instance, and make a difference; to come into a church board or a Sunday school class, or a church choir, and by our touch on it leave it a little higher? Remember, Jesus depended almost wholly on this method. There were no large-scale mass media at His disposal, no radio or television networks. He used the human network, picked a few men, depended on them in the interweaving of the years and the interlacing of the generations, the touch of one life upon another. Even now, if you ask the questions in any group: "Why are you a Christian? What brought you to Christ?" in nearly every instance the answer will be: "A personal touch"; "Someone touched me."

Isn't that what we are here to do? We don't have to push people or preach to them or pressure them in any way. A young minister stood in a railway station in Cleveland and saw a young, blind veteran come in from a train with a heavy suitcase in his hand. The preacher went up to him and offered to carry his suitcase, but the young veteran shrugged him off. He would carry his own

suitcase. "But can I help you some way, take you somewhere?" "Yes," said the veteran, "I would like to go to the information desk." The preacher took his arm rather firmly and started off, but the blind veteran said, "Don't push me, pal. Don't possess me. All I want is the touch of your hand on my shoulder."

I suppose nobody in the crowd among whom we live wants to be pushed or possessed or preached to. But many in it need, and urgently need, the touch of your hand on their shoulders.

The Way to Life

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake . . . shall save it (MARK 8:35).

JESUS TAUGHT AS MUCH IN PARADOX AS IN PARABLE. BOTH are devices to make truth sharp, clear, unforgettable: a parable is a mirror in which we see the reflection of ourselves; a paradox is a riddle, a seeming contradiction in which we see the clash of opposites strike a balance and move to a sharpened point of truth. Truth is so mighty that it has to come in pairs, even as the world itself is held in balance by the pull and tension of opposites—negative and positive, high and low, light and dark, east and west, cold and hot, pro and con. The truth is not in some middle of the road between them but in some higher insight that transcends both.

If someone comes to you with what he calls “the simple gospel,” distrust him. There is no simple gospel; there is no simple anything; life is filled with paradox, seeming contradictions. It cannot be reduced to the little logic of our minds. That man was right who said:

*I followed what I could not understand, because
I knew
That only that which passeth knowledge can be
true.*

This untaught Teacher from Nazareth was a Master of sharp epigram and incisive paradox. He could cut through an ambiguous thought with the sharp thrust of a knife. "The meek shall inherit the earth"—that's a paradox. On the surface it seems impossible, but at least it is unforgettable; and if you hold it in your mind long enough the truth of it will begin to break through. After a while you'll come to see that ultimately there's nothing mightier than the meek, the gentle, the teachable, the disciplined. No one else can inherit the earth.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted"—that's a paradox. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; "The last shall be first, and the first last"; "He that would be greatest, let him be the servant"—Jesus taught with sharp truths that stick in the mind.

I suppose His most widely quoted paradox is this one: "Whoever would save his life will lose it; whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." He is not playing around here with an inspirational theory; this is the truth about life. He is talking about what we all want: to find life, to save life. And between these two opposites, self-loving and self-losing, is the conflict that is going on in everyone of us. Once again it confronts us with the strange process of indirection: the things we find, not by seeking them, but as something added in seeking something else.

We could start off lightly with the problem of self-consciousness. It is said that Billy Sunday, once in preparation for a city-wide mission, wrote the mayor of the city requesting a list of people who were in need of special prayer. The mayor very obligingly sent him the City Directory. Most of us have a battle with shyness, timidity, self-consciousness. If you happen to be plagued with it, it may help you to remember that more than half of any given population is on your side. What a nuisance it is—

timidity, this feeling of inferiority, oversensitivity to criticism, a lurking dread of what other people may say or think which drives us into hiding from them and even from ourselves! The essence of self-consciousness is fear, an extreme awareness of self. You try to make a speech and your self gets in the way, crawls up in your throat, and tenses your muscles. You go out to meet people and ■ chilling nervous sensation freezes your responses.

*There was an old sailor my grandfather knew,
Who had so many things which he wanted to do,
That whenever he thought it was time to begin,
He couldn't, because of the state he was in.*

The torment of timidity! Some people have lived so long with it that they have come to accept it as normal. Some have even come to think of it as a mark of modesty. But these exasperating psychologists keep insisting that it's really a symptom of emotional instability, a tell-tale signal that we are thinking too much of ourselves. It can become quite serious. Too much self-concentration can close too many doors.

The Christian insight here is so obviously elementary that it has become the common-sense-ness of mankind. We need no revelation from above to remind us that at least on the surface this paradox has the truth. We save ourselves by losing ourselves. We can overcome timidity in some measure by a kind of flank movement in which we turn attention away from ourselves to something else. We can find ourselves by losing ourselves. "Get lost!" is a slang expression with a good deal of psychological fitness in it. If you want to make a speech—get lost, lose yourself in the speech. Don't think of *you*, think of *it*, or think of them, the people who have to put up with it. If you want to win friends and influence people—get lost, get

yourself off your mind. A person never does so poorly for himself as when he is thinking too much about himself. It's that process of indirection again, a kind of judicious diversion which every mother has learned to use with a crying child by diverting his attention from the feelings that trouble him.

An eighty-year-old man on his sixtieth wedding anniversary gave some helpful hints to young husbands: "If you get in a spat with your wife," he said, "don't spat back. Start counting and don't stop at ten; keep going. Pretty soon you'll be more interested in counting than in listening to your wife." Judicious diversion—the trick is to get your mind off yourself and get yourself off your mind. You can't be yourself until you forget yourself.

Next time you drive your automobile, learn a lesson from it. Directly in front of the driver's seat is a panel of push buttons, gauges, and instruments. They are there for a purpose, to keep you informed on what's going on inside the complex machinery: a speedometer to give you the speed and mileage, the oil and gasoline gauges to let you know about fuel and lubrication, and so on. You had better look at them occasionally. But if out on the road you keep your eyes fixed on them, anxious about the inner works, you're likely to land in the ditch. We're not made for too much introspection and every basic wisdom about the human soul coincides with the paradox that people whose thoughts are too much on themselves turn wholly inward. Feeling every pulsebeat, analyzing every muscular twitch, and checking every emotional reaction, they are likely to end up with more inner trouble than by their introspection they had attempted to avoid.

Now, dip deeper into the paradox and its promise of deliverance, not alone from self-consciousness but from the deeper moral problem of self-centeredness. It is the

clear Christian conviction that self-centeredness is the essence of man's sin. The root sin, the great granddaddy of all sin—"original sin," if you like—is this biological inclination to put ourselves at the center of life and make everything else revolve around us. We are born self-centered: as babies we are the center of the only interest that we have; everything exists for us. Then we carry that into adulthood and fill the world with its consequences: an insidious self-centeredness that corrupts everything we do, as individuals and groups, nations, races, classes. The New Testament speaks of the death of self, the denial of self, the losing of self to find life. And this paradox is called salvation, deliverance from self-centeredness.

The central problem of every man's life has always been his battle with himself, how to get himself out of the center and put something else there. "I" trouble, someone called it—capital "I," alphabetical heresy; big "I," little "u." Here's a little jingle that speaks for everyone:

*I do not mind my "p's" and "q's," how careless
I must be.
Nor do my actions always suit my neighbors to
a "t."
I think perhaps my greatest fault that I can now
recall—
I make my "I's" a lot too large and all my "u's"
too small.*

This is a universal sin—big "I" and little "u." It's an idolatry, really, a bowing down before pronouns: I, Me, My. Because if *I* am at the center of life, or if *we* are at the center of life, *God* isn't. We have put ourselves where God should be and the sin of all sins is making ourselves God. The world today is in deep trouble with this—little

men putting themselves in the center, exalting themselves as God. The queer thing about it is that it queers everything it wants. When we exalt ourselves we diminish ourselves. When we put ourselves at the center we become eccentric, off-center. I walked into the parsonage one day and heard the most weird, cackling noises emerging from the record player in the sun porch. Investigating, I found some teen-age boys, my own son among them, who had made a discovery that if you take an old phonograph record and bore another hole a bit off-center and play it that way, you can get something that beats the Beatles!

The noise we're hearing in the world now—off-center—is the raucous cries of race and clan, everyone shouting "I," "Me," "Mine!" How do we get peace in a world like that? And how do we save ourselves from the sickness of self-centeredness? The answer is, we don't. We cannot save ourselves, and that's the weakness of many of the proposed cures. They turn inward for the answers and often succeed only in aggravating the sickness. "Never before," said Rollo May, "has a generation been so preoccupied with themselves, troubled about themselves, trying to find themselves." And thus he wrote his book *Modern Man in Search of Himself*.

So much of the emphasis is turned inward—self-knowledge, self-discovery, self-expression—as though the answers are to be found within. The late Arthur Brisbane, just before he died, made a prophetic pronouncement: "The psychology of modern times has turned man's mind too much on himself. Based on the old Greek admonition, 'Know thyself,' it has encouraged and over-emphasized the introspective, know yourself, discover yourself. But men have never done that. They come into the world weeping and go out of it wondering and never seem to fathom the depths of the self. Perhaps it is no part of the Divine plan to have men fully know them-

selves. That knowledge would make them lose interest in their work, the more important creative work which they were put here to do. A healthier approach than know thyself is the Christian one: give thyself, deny thyself, lose thyself." This is the wisdom we've forgotten: we find our true selves only when we get them out of the center and put God there; when we move from a self-centered life to a God-centered life. Think of the men and women who have found themselves by this process, by getting themselves out of the center and putting God there.

Think of John Wesley who for so long a time did his human best to save himself. And then came that unforgettable night when he saw that his best hope was to let go and let God, to forget himself and put his trust in the mercy and saving grace of God.

Finally, dip into the deepest place in the paradox: deliverance from self-sparingness or self-preservation. There's an old aphorism repeated so often that it has come to common acceptance: "Self-preservation is nature's first law." Is it? Is it true that the first law of nature is to protect ourselves and save ourselves? Well, it is, provided we remember it's a paradox. "He that loseth his life shall keep it." To keep life, to really preserve life, we must be willing to lose it, to spend it, to give it away. On the surface that surely seems a contradiction, yet few principles have been so convincingly demonstrated in human experience. We have to live by the law of expenditure; everything does. We can't hoard life as we hoard sugar or surplus wheat. We can't say to our memory, "Look, memory, I will need you in my old age, so I won't use you now; I will spare you." Or muscles—if we don't use our muscles this year, we won't have them next year. This, too, is nature's law: we lose what we do not use. How many fine things do we lose by our over-

cautious efforts to save them, protect them, and preserve them? You have to spend yourself to keep it—lose it, give it away.

Some years ago one of our best-known clinical psychologists in America, who had ignored religion for years, found himself coming back to it by the rediscovery of the paradox that what Jesus said about finding life by giving it was what he had been trying to say for years to his patients. He said he had learned in his own professional practice that the self-sparing life is self-defeating, and that when people try to protect themselves by withdrawing from the risks and hurts and demands of life they invariably diminish the self they are trying to protect. He told of a young woman who came to him asking help in the simple matter of making friends. She complained that her circle of friendship was shrinking into a narrow world of loneliness. Probing back into the pattern of her life he discovered that growing up in a comfortable home she had never put herself out to mingle with people unless she got enjoyment out of their company. She had habitually avoided doing anything she disliked. She had joined no church, no community enterprise that involved responsibility. She didn't want that. When company came to her home—that is, people who didn't appeal to her—she simply kept to her room. And so it happened that, not willing to put herself out for others, she found herself gradually left out by others. How often loneliness is self-inflicted. Not always, to be sure—health factors and the aging process enter into it—but people who by choice live to themselves are invariably left to themselves with nothing in their little world except themselves. How true it is: "He that saveth his life shall lose it."

A minister told of a home he visited in the New Hampshire hills. The weathering of the years had dealt rather tragically with the old house which once had known the

laughter of lively life. The old porch with its frescoed columns had rotted down. The outer rooms, unpainted, uncared for, had one by one become unlivable. As this process of disintegration was going on outwardly, the family kept retreating to the inner rooms, dragging bits of furniture with them, until now, with the children grown up and gone, the old folks lived in one small room in the middle of the big old dilapidated house. Many lives get like that as the years go by—emptier and emptier, smaller and smaller—until the only interest left is self-interest. It can happen at sixty; it can happen at sixteen—nothing left in you, but you. Zero!

Nothing is as sure or true as this paradox that the selfish man is the shrinking man; his world grows smaller and smaller until he abides alone. The giving man is the living man; his world grows larger with his touch and everything multiplies in his hand. The very deep need of being needed, the need of something outside ourselves to love, is deeply planted in our nature. The first law of the heart is to love; not to love is to lose life. We need to love even more than we need to be loved. To preserve life we need to give it to something.

How often this is demonstrated in experience, sometimes quite dramatically. During the last war a young woman who lived with her doctor husband in India one day saw him die with a sudden illness. The shock of it was so great that she lost all interest in life and didn't care whether she lived or died. On shipboard coming back to America there was a little seven-year-old boy whose missionary parents had been killed in Burma. "You and I," he said to her, "are the only Americans on this ship." Plainly, he wanted to be good friends, but she carefully avoided him. She couldn't forget her sorrow even enough to be friendly to a lonely little boy. But when the ship was torpedoed and sinking in the night, she resisted the im-

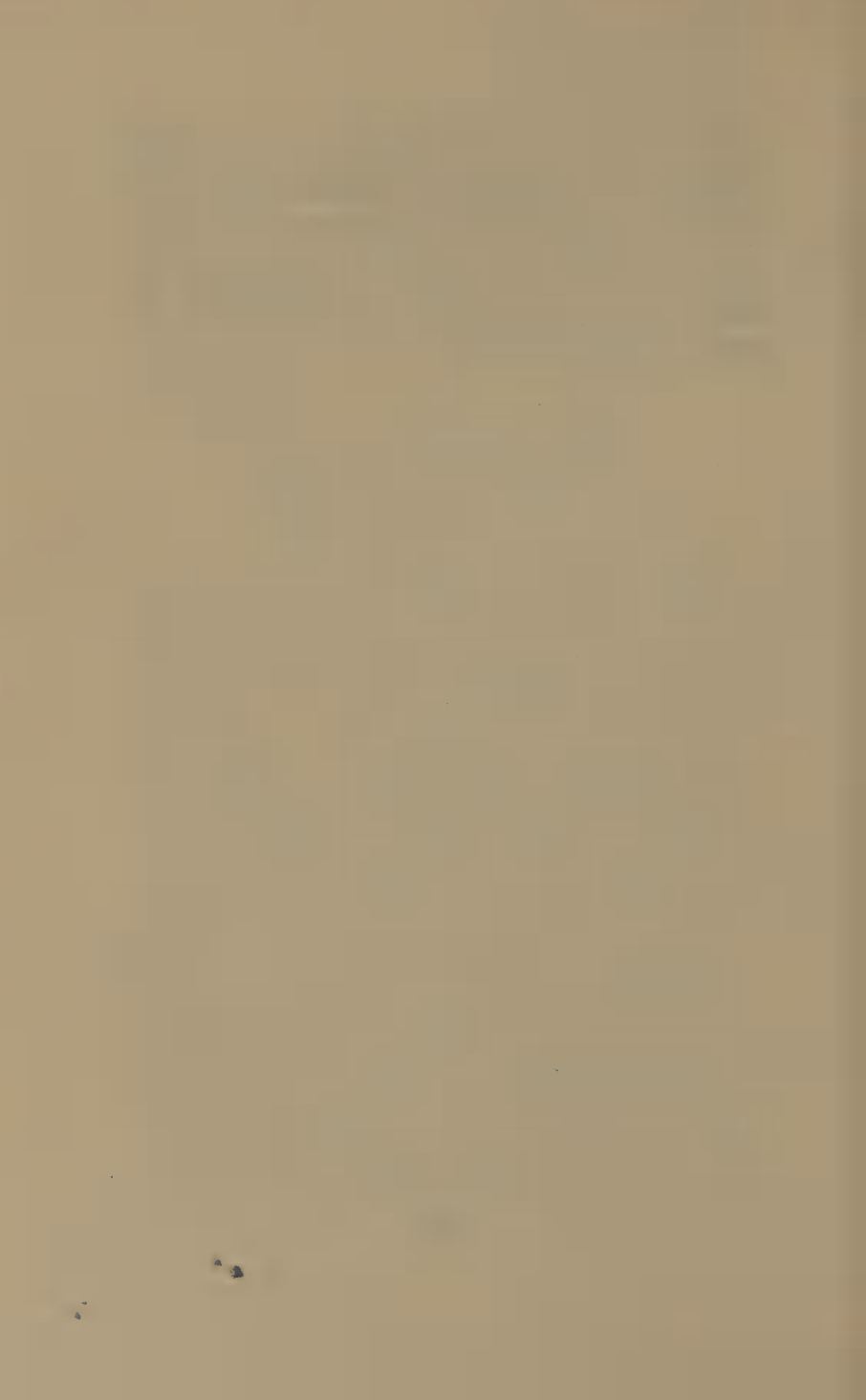
pulse to go down into forgetfulness with it when she saw the boy shivering like a terrified little bird. "He came to me," she said, "and clung close. He needed me." Through several days adrift in the South Atlantic they pulled each other through. All her friends said it would be difficult to say which had saved which: whether it was the woman who saved the child or the child who saved the woman. For it is one of the unexpected miracles of living that when we save another, we thereby save ourselves.

*Seldom can the heart be lonely,
If it seeks a lonelier still;
Self-forgetting, seeking only
Emptier cups of love to fill.*

Jesus put it all in a paradox of twenty words: "He that loseth his life for My sake, shall keep it unto life eternal." He was His own best illustration: there on the cross He was losing His life. Mockers at the cross said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save . . ." (MATTHEW 27:42), not knowing that in their mocking words they were saying the truest thing about life. Think of all the people who, saving others, could not save themselves. Emerson in his essay on compensation said, "See how the mass of men cautiously lower themselves into nameless graves when here and there an unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality."

This has always been the paradox of Christian faith; and I believe that future generations will go deeper into its meaning than we have, for this is the law of life. In the meantime, in how many ways can we make it *our* experience! Someone sent me a little book entitled *Try Giving Yourself Away*. It's a simple story, one man's story of the serendipities, the happy surprises that came to him from just watching for chances to be helpful to

people; the enrichment, the unexpected enlargement of his life when he began to give himself away and think more about service to others than the survival of himself. Try giving yourself away. Don't hoard your heart, don't spare yourself, don't be overprotective of yourself. Try giving yourself away, for "he who would save his life shall lose it, and he who loseth his life for My sake will keep it unto life eternal."





The Lure of Learning

... *have dominion* ... (GENESIS 1:28).

EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT WORD BECAUSE IT IS THE name of the process by which men move from ignorance to knowledge. It is much too large a matter to be localized in any formal system or limited to what happens in the classroom of a school. Education began long before there was a classroom. God put man to school on the day of his creation; He set him down in a risky world and said to him, "Have dominion." that puts us all in the business of education, the biggest, most important business in the world. We are all educators; we are both teachers and students in God's great school of life.

Because man is a stubborn student—limited, lazy, slow to learn—the great unseen Teacher has endowed him with two powerful incentives: pain and pleasure. He is pushed by one and pulled by the other; both are continuously at work in him. Like all living things, men move only when they are stirred, awakened, tickled, or excited; or as the dignified writer of the text books would say: "All life is response to stimuli." By these twin incentives of pain and pleasure, man is moved from ignorance to knowledge, and sometimes even to wisdom.

We are so familiar with the first—the pain principle, the pushing process—that it tends to overshadow and

obscure the second. Examine the proverbs of our culture, for instance, and you will find they are heavily weighted with the idea that all learning, by necessity, comes hard. We talk about the "university of hard knocks"; "Necessity," we say, "is the mother of invention"; "Experience is a hard teacher"; and Emerson, in his essay, said, "When men sit on the cushion of their advantages, they go to sleep. When they are pushed, shoved by adversity, they have a chance to learn something." Granted, all of this is true: pain is a powerful teacher; it has pushed mankind into learning. Arnold Toynbee made it the whole thesis of history: "Civilization began," he said, "with the crack of a whip, and nations came to hardihood by the stimulus of blows." No one would deny the accuracy of that insight.

However, it is not the whole thesis of history. Surely no less a stimulus to learning is the lure in it. When God does something, He makes it interesting, fills it with mystery and allure. And in every phase of life the push of pain is matched by a corresponding pull of pleasure. In even the urgent matter of human survival, that is so. What keeps our bodies alive? Food. What moves us to consume it? Of course, the pain of hunger prods us, but what a pleasure it is to eat! We are not conscious of any pushing process when we sit down to a steak dinner. The pleasure of eating is nature's way of keeping us alive. Or take it in the ongoing of the race—what keeps the human family replenished generation after generation? Some powerful stimulus is here to keep life going and the children coming on. Of course, we would say the pain of loneliness drives man to companionship. "It is not good for man to live alone." But what a pleasure it is to fall in love, to make a house a home! The pleasant experience of companionship and the sacrament of sexual communion brings into birth all generations of men.

There is tremendous hopefulness in the fact that the

divine Father trains His children by the pull of attraction and moves man from ignorance into knowledge more by the lure of a light within than the crack of a whip without. See then how serendipity works in the area of knowledge. Consider then the lure in learning: how nature teaches us by the process of indirection, teases us into knowing, gets our instincts caught in some pleasurable pursuit, in the continuing charm of which the learning process is stimulated, developed, and fulfilled.

Curiosity is a lure. We are all born with an inborn itchiness to know, to wonder, to ask questions. Child life is conspicuously gifted with curiosity, a built-in, divine provision for mental growth. Everything in reach is questioned, investigated, all tasted and pulled apart—nature's lure to learning. "Mama, why?" "Mama, what?" A little five-year-old girl driving with her father in the country, said, "Daddy, how big is this lake?" "I don't know." After a moment: "Daddy, how high is that mountain?" "I don't know." "You don't mind my asking all these questions, do you, Daddy?" "Of course not, honey. How else would you ever learn?"

What a pity we can't keep the sense of wonder, the questing mind; for when it dies, the light goes out and education stops. Fortunately, many do keep it and with it have changed the outer face of the world. What we call science is nothing but snooping on a more mature level, the curiosity of trained minds lured by mystery into knowing. When Michael Faraday showed his first toy dynamo to a friend, she asked, "What use is it?" And he replied, "What use is a baby?" Why do inventors invent, and explorers discover? Seldom are they driven by the crack of a whip. They are drawn by some deep instinct within themselves to know. They follow an interesting trail and learning comes by indirection. The sense of wonder is the mother of invention.

Then, too, life gets lured by its loves. A little girl's love

for a doll gets her into deep knowing very quickly. A boy grows up through a series of enthusiastic and spasmodic passions grouping themselves around his impulses which may change from year to year and indeed from day to day. One day he gets a sudden passion for a sailboat. You see him with his head buried in a book—*Popular Mechanics* or *National Geographic* or a romance of the sea—and what was dull geography in the classroom glides into his mind without his knowing he has learned.

I watched this process unfold one day in our own back yard during the Olympic Games, when some neighbor's children reproduced the whole stupendous show. They ran and jumped and threw the javelin, set new records in every sport. And incidentally, between events of the decathlon, they carried on a discussion about Olympia—how Daddy said it started in ancient Greece. What a delightful way to learn without knowing that you are learning! What a delightful way to get introduced into that Mediterranean culture out of which so much of our own has come!

One reason our youngsters are not surprised at anything that happens in the space age is that for a long time, in imagination, they have been living there. Imagination—"gateway to the stars"! What a pity we can't keep it! We do, in some degree, and I venture that most of us were lured into the vocation we now follow by some flash of imagination. A college president whose major was history said that his mental awakening came to him when as a boy hoeing corn on his father's farm he turned over an old Indian arrowhead. His lifetime interest in history began there, in reading books on Indian folklore to find out more about that Indian arrowhead. Life gets lured by its loves. We set out in pursuit of some fascinating thing and knowledge about it comes by indirection.

Well, we could proceed further along this line to con-

sider the fact that most of our now-serious pursuits had their origin in the pleasure principle. Certainly the fine arts had. People sang first for the fun of it and learned the intricate skills of music, painting, and writing for the sheer joy of creating. Chemistry began in alchemy: people hunting for the elixir of life. History began in entertainment: folk tales told over and over by roving minstrels. It would be interesting to trace the origin of our industries. Many of our giant industries were created around some invention which, in the beginning, was little more than a toy—moving pictures, radio, electricity, steam power. Long before James Watts, the steam box was a fascinating plaything used mostly for blowing whistles and amusing people.

When the Spaniards came to the Americas, they noticed some tribes in South America playing games with balls that bounced. They were made out of a substance they got from trees, *kahucha*—Indian rubber. Quite a business now—*kahucha*—a multi-billion-dollar business. We drive across the country on *kahucha*. Or we fly across it in machines with wings because back there at the turn of the century two brothers took time off from their bicycle business to play around with gliders.

We could go on and multiply illustrations of how the restless mind of man has been lured into learning, has come to master an enormous wealth of knowledge—not bludgeoned into it by the crack of a coercive whip, but beckoned into it by the lure of an inner light. How much is there yet for the mind to know? It is as if all the wisdom of the universe were out there like an undiscovered continent beckoning, tantalizing man, saying, "Come find me. Fall in love with something, and knowledge concerning it *will be added unto you.*"

This is the nature of the mind. It is God who has put the lure of learning into life. It is God who has put the

great "Why?" in man's mind, and made him to walk up the stairway of his imaginings. He tempts us with great mysteries and lures us on by mighty questions to find the living truth.

Now let us ask the question: if this is the nature of the mind, the divine provision for mental growth, what should be the nature of our educational institutions? Must we not bring our learning methods into harmony with the natural laws of the mind and magnify in them the element of lure?

Bring it to focus on two areas of our concern, the school and the church, knowledge of life and knowledge of God? When we come to apply this principle in the area of formal education we are certainly not proposing something new. Good teachers have always known that their highest function is not merely to instruct, to transmit information from textbook to notebook, but to awaken the interest, capture the mind, and stir it up to think. Good teachers by instinct have always known that. And thus, no matter how often education falls into the rut of rote, or grows dull in lifeless forms, it is always rescued by people who remember the lure in it, the fun and pleasure of learning. Sometimes the rescuers themselves have to be rescued when they get too far out, when they make a cult of the pleasure principle and divorce it from the demands of essential disciplines. There is some drudgery in learning and always will be. Nevertheless, there is in the learning process this element of lure—what Dr. Alfred Whitehead called "the continuing joy of discovery"—and the first aim of education is to kindle it, to keep alive the sense of wonder in the growing mind and awaken the emotional interest that lures it on to knowledge.

Most of us remember some teachers who did that for

us: they awakened us; they put down the book, picked up the mind, and patiently probed around in the brain box to find the hidden abilities, and coaxed them up by the lure of an inner light. I remember an English teacher in high school who made me fall in love with words (she even made grammar glamorous!), so that ever since then I walk with admiration around a well-formed, beautiful sentence as some people walk around a rose. Curriculum, someone said, is ninety percent teacher; that is to say, most of the knowledge we get in school isn't in the book. It is in the person who holds the book and it comes from his mind into ours more by contagion than by direct instruction. A friend of mine, paying tribute to a great teacher of his youth, said, "He seemed to have a passionate desire to put in every student's hand a candle of discovery."

It is the lure in learning that is important. And perhaps the biggest question back of all the questions educators are wrestling with now is this: can we spark a generation of forty-five million youths to an intellectual advance? Can we stir them into knowing what they must now know; not alone to make them good scientists but good citizens; not to keep up with the Soviets but to catch up with the great forward-thrusting of the human mind on all levels? We are in the midst of the most fascinating intellectual revolution in history. This wonderful world of God is turning out to be more wonderful than anything we had dreamed; it is heavy with the promise of unbelievable things yet to be revealed. Can we come alive to it? Can we thrill a generation into knowledge and wisdom in the use of it? Wisdom, we insist, means more than knowledge. This cleavage between the head and the heart, between morals and mathematics, is as fictitious as it is fatal, and cannot long continue. There is a learning of the mind and there is a learning of the heart; and there

is nothing in the Constitution or the separation of church and state to prevent the teaching of both.

Ever since the first steps into the space age, the public school has been the target of all sorts of criticisms—some good, some bad, some wise, some otherwise. We squinted our eyes at Russia, beat our breasts, scolded our teachers, and put some pressures on our schools. Perhaps some good will come of it, but you can't coerce the mind to think any more than you can make flowers grow with a bulldozer. It is the lure in learning that is important.

When we turn to Christian education, the transmission of our faith, we are confined exclusively to the element of lure. Here we have no whip, no power, and no desire to cudgel the mind into knowing God. We can't club the affections into loving Him; we can't coerce our children into goodness by throwing the Bible at them and saying, "Here is the way of God. Now, learn it!" Here we must depend wholly on the power of persuasion, the contagion of the Spirit, the lure of the inner light. ". . . if I be lifted up, . . . [I] will draw all men . . ." (JOHN 12:32). That is our business, too—to draw, not drive; to capture the minds of our children and bring about in their unfolding lives the deeper awakening of the spirit which we call "commitment" or "conversion." This is the goal of Christian education—in the home, in the church: to lift up Christ as Saviour, Lord of life, to open their hearts to the highest knowledge, to enter with sympathetic understanding the mind of a child and call out the glory that is hidden there. In the routine of what we do, there is this wonderful romance. You never can tell what possibilities lie dormant in a life. You never can tell what talent is there or where the creative urge of the spirit, which is latent in everyone, may break out when the interest is quickened by the lure of an inner light.

I suppose that what we ask of our Sunday school teachers is a human impossibility. With limited facilities and still more limited time, we ask them to perform miracles, to lead our children into the ways of God. And it happens—mostly by the process of indirection, the touch of one life upon another life. Few people are argued into faith. Most of us were drawn into it by the magnetism of God's Spirit, by the attraction of some person in whose life we saw the life of Christ reflected.

We remember how Jesus did that. His enormous contribution to the mental stature of mankind is the drawing power of His Spirit—His great faith in ordinary people, and His ability to call out the nobility latent in their lives. When He saw the slightest spark of faith He nurtured it, praised it, and lured it up into the light.

You may know the story about that little girl in Stockholm whose childhood was filled with sadness. She was a little orphan-girl, cared for by a poor working-woman who locked her in the room each day while she went out to work and make a living for both. There was no way the child could while away the long hours except to sit in the window, watching and listening to the birds and singing to her sad little self. But the old music master in the city, passing that way, heard the lovely voice, and with his trained ear knew what was in it. He called a friend to listen outside the window, and they made arrangements with her guardian. Little by little, by patient encouragement, he nurtured the gift and drew it out, until at last she came to conquer the heart of Europe and America. Some still say there never was a voice like Jenny Lind's, pure as the notes of the nightingale. But must not something be also said about that old music master who called the glory out?

To help a person, ever so little, to discover what is in him and to get it out, is the biggest business in the world.

This is the business of Christian education: to put in the hand of every child a candle of discovery, to kindle the inner light which, like that star in the East, lured the wise men to the manger of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Boris Pasternak, in *Doctor Zhivago*, said there are just two forces at work in the world, "the cudgel and the inner music." All around us is the sounding of the cudgel—noisy, raucous, full of fury, the power of the big stick. But as for us whose hope lies in the emancipation, not the regimentation of the human spirit, we put down our money and our lives on the quiet power of the inner music.

The Field of Treasure

. . . the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field . . . (MATTHEW 13:44).

JESUS TOLD A SERENDIPITY STORY. "A MAN PLOWED A FIELD," He said, "and found in it a treasure." "The Kingdom of God," He said, "is like a treasure hidden in a field." How far this parable reaches into life—the hidden treasures, the unexpected discoveries, the incidental surprises in the field of Christian commitment!

We have to keep in mind that in the days of Jesus treasure-hunting was a legitimate business. There were men who made their living hunting treasure. There were no steel vaults, no stock markets, no insurance companies. Men protected their wealth by hiding it. Palestine was often invaded and often looted; bandits were everywhere. A man could not travel even from Jerusalem down to Jericho without the risk of being waylaid and stripped of his wealth. The common practice was to bury it, to hide it in all sorts of precarious places—in cellars, in caves, under the rocks in the fields—against the risk of losing it. And under the old principle of "finders keepers" sanctioned in some instances in the law—"the find belongs to the finder"—the treasure-hunt was an alluring and often highly profitable game.

Nor has it wholly lost its lure. Treasure-hunting is still

a flourishing industry. In the Keys of Florida, in the islands of the Caribbean, and along the whole Atlantic seacoast where in the old days many ships were sunk by hurricane or pillaged by pirates, many believe that lost treasures of vast wealth still lie buried in many hidden places. Expeditions are made yearly by secretive, tight-lipped men armed with picks and shovels, diving gear, and new electronic devices to search out the hidden treasures of the past. Speak the word "treasure" and all ears are open. It's an exciting word.

The Kingdom of God, said Jesus, is like a treasure which a man one day discovered when plowing a field. He wasn't looking for that treasure; he was plowing a field. There was a clink of metal against the plow and there it was—unexpected riches! It is a parable of life, a story that opens up the whole matter of rewards, about which we never seem to think clearly. These are the things that get added unexpectedly in the Christian pursuit of life.

Let us look at it from two viewpoints, first from the area of social advancement. It is an instructive fact to remember that most of the social gains of Christian centuries have come by the process of indirection; they were not deliberately planned, not consciously intended, but unexpectedly discovered in the field of Christian concern. One of the most fascinating chapters in Christian history is the story of how the social conscience of the Christian movement gradually, unconsciously expanded. The first followers of Christ who went out into the world to witness for Him had no thought of changing its social customs or institutions. To be sure, from the beginning they had a warm heart, a social sensitivity, a compassionate concern for people. But they had no idea of the explosive quality of the ideas they held or the far-reaching

social implications to which the ideas would inevitably lead. They were out simply to convert people.

When the Apostle Paul, for example, sailed out from Troas, bringing the gospel westward, he had no intention of upsetting the social patterns of the Roman Empire. He had no five-year plan in his pocket to create Western civilization. He had one aim: to make Christ known, to win men to Him, to proclaim the gospel of Christ which, he said, was the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. That was His single, simple aim. But in that gospel was a power of which he had not dreamed. He was plowing a field and in it were treasures and social surprises beyond his comprehension.

Let us pause here to consider a few. We of the Western world who have inherited these treasures take them too much for granted and forget to an amazing degree the source of their existence. It has been pointed out often and by many that part of the impoverishment of our culture is that we have largely forgotten its origin. Dr. Ralph Sockman said, "When a family is on a long automobile trip, when the road is dusty and disagreeable and the assistant chauffeurs in the rear seat are a bit too audible with their complaints about the ride, it is sometimes well just to stop the car and ask whether anyone wishes to go back." Sometimes it is well to stop the car of Western history here where we complain so much, and ask if anyone really wants to go back—back to the darkness that was before the Christian light came.

Take it first in the field of social compassion—institutions of mercy, a new outflow of charity, a certain new tenderness in life that came in with the Christian gospel. We take it all for granted now, as if it had always been here. Dr. T. R. Glover, the renowned Cambridge scholar, had a great respect and affection for the world of ancient Greece. He knew so much about it that someone called

him "Aristotle's secretary." Despite his respect, he was careful to point out the harshness of that world before it was touched with Christian concern for the weak and the helpless. He quotes a letter written by a Greek workman to his wife, one of the many bits of papyrus unearthed by archeologists. This man had gone to Alexandria to find work. His wife had been expecting a baby when he left and he wrote a letter to her:

"Hilarian, to Alis: Greetings. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not fidget if I stay in Alexandria. I beseech you, take care of the little child, and as soon as we have our wages I will send you something. When you are delivered, if it is a male let it live, if a female cast it out. How can I forget you? So don't fidget."

Apart from the familiar husbandly admonition about the fidgets, that letter is quite revealing about the moral climate of the pre-Christian world. Life was unbelievably cheap; in every phase of it, cheap. Some babies were not permitted to live. If they were healthy, male, and wanted, they were kept. If for any reason they were not wanted, they were disposed of, left in the forest to die, or, as Lecky said, thrown into the streams for the crocodiles. Child exposure, infanticide, was common practice.

It was not the intention of early Christians to change the practice or abolish the custom. They were only concerned about the deserted babies. Jesus had set a child in the midst and said, ". . . of such is the kingdom of heaven" (MATTHEW 19:14)—life was precious to God. So they rescued the unwanted babies the pagans had thrown away and cared for them in the Christian community. Soon babies were left on the doorsteps of Christian homes, or later at the gates of foundling hospitals. In time public conscience was quickened and laws were passed, some even before Constantine, to prohibit child murder and exposure.

Certainly something happened in the coming of Christ to vastly heighten the sense of human worth. And out of a new emphasis on the individual worth have come streams of healing in all areas of life.

The same is true of slavery. Christianity was born in an hour when tyranny and slavery were accepted as essential, solid, social institutions, permanent as parentage and marriage. Christians made no direct attack on them, raised no voice against them, seemed rather to accept them. They taught slaves to be obedient to their masters, and encouraged no revolt of the servant classes whose condition was pathetic. But oddly enough, all the time the church was talking to slaves about obedience and patient endurance as a Christian virtue, it was undermining its own teaching by the effect it was producing and the spirit it was promoting. It made great inroads into the slave class, taught slaves that they were sons of God, and taught their masters to be brothers. Christ had died for them, master and slave alike. They took communion together, sat side by side in the love feast of the church, and joined in the common prayer of penitence and faith. "In Christ," said Paul, "there is no bond nor free. We are one in Christ." It was a kind of subversion in reverse. Teach people to think and their chains will drop away; teach them to love and their servitude will be undermined.

Slavery was destroyed, someone said, by four words: "For whom Christ died"—four words seeping into the social conscience of mankind, although it took centuries of years for the idea to be fully understood and finally accomplished. Like an unexpected treasure hidden in the field was the great emancipation of the slave.

As with the institutions of mercy, so with institutions of the mind. On the gates of Harvard University is this inscription: "After God had carried us safe to New Eng-

land and we had builded our houses, provided necessities for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship and settled the civil government, one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in dust."

In colonial America, if you didn't want Christian education, you did not get any. All education was Christian, all colleges—Harvard first, then Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton; and for a long time after, most institutions of higher learning were Christian. Even yet, out of 1,937 colleges and universities, 763 are church-related, church-sponsored, established by the church. How did this happen, the church in education? Well, the treasure was in the field, not deliberately intended but indirectly derived in the discovery that all efforts to save human souls must include the emancipation, the awakening of the mind.

Like a treasure in the field came the wonderful gift of science, perhaps the most glittering jewel of Western culture. Professor Hocking of Harvard calls science "the secular offspring of Christianity," the secular child of faith. Certainly nobody planned it; no one set out to bring this recalcitrant offspring into being. In fact, a pretty good case could be made for the complaint that Christianity would have stifled science and strangled the unwanted child in its cradle. It was churchmen who persecuted Galileo and Kepler and Copernicus, and who resisted the inquiring mind—and in some areas they do it still. Nevertheless, Dr. Hocking insists that science could not have come up anywhere except in a climate and culture prepared by the religious strivings of the ages. The idea of one God, one systematic, rational order which men could study and depend upon, is the basic assumption from which all science takes its rise. "Without a

belief," said Albert Einstein, "in the inner harmony of the universe, there would be no science at all."

Here, then, is an interesting paradox: churchmen resisting new truth, yet at the same time going right on laying the groundwork for the kind of systematic thinking that leads to it; preparing the soil for the scientific approach without intending it; standing for the idea of rational order without knowing where it would lead. They persecuted Galileo, sent him to prison to say his prayers and do penance for his heresy; yet even in his heresy Galileo was their own legitimate child. They plowed the field and in it was this amazing, unexpected thing.

Move now into the area of political expression. Like a treasure hidden in a field came the wonderful gift of democracy. No one dreamed that it was there or set out purposely to find it. It came up as the inevitable consequence of a certain belief about the origin of man, the rights and dignity of the individual. Thomas Mann said, "Democracy is nothing but a political name for the ideals which Christianity brought into the world as religion." If anyone wants to question the accuracy of this appraisal, he should at least take the word of the people who hate democracy and oppose it. Karl Marx knew where democracy came from. "The democratic concept of man," he said, "is false. It holds that each man has value as a sovereign being. This is the dream, the illusion, the postulate of Christianity." Adolf Hitler knew it, too: "To the Christian doctrine of the significance of the human soul, I oppose with icy clarity the saving doctrine of the insignificance of the human soul." If we have forgotten our origin, those who hate it haven't.

We're having quite a hassle now on the subject of separation of church and state. What did the founding fathers mean by that? Where do the limits run? What is

separated from what? Does the Constitution mean to exclude sectarianism from public education, or does it mean to exclude God from public life? Must our children stop addressing their prayers to the heavenly Father and in the future say, "To whom it may concern"? There is an area of vagueness here which will certainly have to be thought through carefully.

Here is an interesting story of a school in New York State. When the Supreme Court ruled out the Regent's Prayer, the children and their teachers were for a while bewildered. They recognized the rightness of that particular decision; but not willing to give up prayer, they looked around for a substitute prayer and by happy accident found one not written by the Regents. The student body joined together in thanking God that "all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." That is one prayer the Supreme Court is not likely ever to rescind!

How do you separate the fruit from the root? Out of the field of Christian belief, out of its concernment and commitment, out of the single aim through the centuries to convert people and save their souls, have come so many by-products, social surprises, unanticipated consequences, something added in the Christian pursuit of life. Serendipity! A man, said Jesus, plowed a field and in it found an unexpected treasure.

We could quote Toynbee on this: "Christianity has done many incidental things in the course of pursuing its major objective, and one of its incidental activities has been to serve as the midwife of our western civilization. Our western civilization could not have come to birth without the aid of the Christian Church."

Let's get personal about the things that get added in Christian commitment. Not alone in social history but in

personal history, too, when we choose this Kingdom of righteousness we find much more in it than we expected. We are not encouraged in the Gospels to promise rewards for righteousness, or to look for the goodies in the package. The very idea that Christians ought to be rewarded seems to some people unworthy; and we would quickly agree that to turn purposely to religion for dividends, for benefits, for what we can get out of it, is to exploit it. On the other hand, if nothing comes of it, why bother with it? If we are the same small, impoverished selves as we were before, why fool with it? What we can say with confidence is that life has its steady issues, virtue is its own reward, and goodness has its normal by-products; therefore, every decision for Christ means unexpected enlargement of life. The treasure comes with the field.

The Bible isn't as meticulous about this matter of rewards as we are, and the sayings of Jesus are filled with the promise of something added, gifts freely given, and the goodness of God that does more than we ask or even think. It is what the Bible calls "the grace of God"—unmerited favor, unsearchable riches. I often think of young people making their life decisions and their familiar fear of total commitment to Christ, this Kingdom of God which seems a forbidding thing, and which seems to take away from them so much they think is important. It is such a silly fear, because we forget God's kind of arithmetic. The gospel of Christ is not subtraction, but addition—things that get added, wonderful things, treasures that come with the field. When you plow this field you have no idea what is hidden in it. When you choose Christ you never know what is wrapped up in the package. Some of us speak from experience here and from observation of many lives across many years. We chose Him once and the field has been full of serendipities, un-

expected riches. We weren't looking for them; the treasures were there in the field.

Someday, when I put a new filler in my ballpoint pen, I'm going to write the life stories of men and women I have personally known whose lives are a reflection of this parable. They opened their lives to Christ through some need, and then went on to discover that He was much greater than they had dreamed. The more fully they linked their lives with His, the more limitless were the possibilities He opened up, until they came to realize what Paul meant in his rhapsody: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I CORINTHIANS 2:9).

Let me illustrate with a story; it is one of the many life stories that illustrate what Christ came to do: not to condemn but to save; not to subtract but to add, to enlarge, to enrich life and bring life more abundant. It's a story about a man who is described in a national magazine as one of the best-loved men in Michigan and whose influence for good is incalculable. It's the story of a life beginning in pitiful poverty, as one of eleven children of a poor immigrant family. He went to work at ten years of age sorting rags in a paper mill at twenty-five cents a thirteen-hour day. He was so nearsighted, that he was almost blind. With eyes so weak he couldn't distinguish color, he had to train himself to sort the rags by touch. He came to fifteen years of age with no education, no ambition to get one, no one to care enough to see that he did. He was an ignorant millhand with no hope of being anything else.

Then one fall night there came to him what he called his "great awakening." The minister of a nearby church was conducting a week of evangelistic meetings. "Let's go to the revival," said one of the millhands, "and have a

good laugh." But the preacher fooled them. What he talked about was no laughing matter. He didn't rave or rant or condemn people. He talked about the future—theirs—and asked them what they were going to do about it. "Are you living each day like every other day, round and round like a squirrel in a wheel, or are you trying to get out of the wheel? A year from now, ten years, twenty, will you be any better, any bigger, any different?" The poor, ignorant millhand couldn't laugh at that. "I went to laugh," he said, "and came away to live."

Down to the altar of the church he went that night to find God, to find life. "And from that night on," he said, "a new world for me began to open up." He met new people, people who cared, who made him feel there was something he was missing and who were ready to help him reach for it. Some of the other millhands laughed, but the folks at the church didn't. With this new light of Christ in his mind, he came slowly up out of the world of darkness. Night after night by the kerosene lamp he learned to read, poring over stubborn letters with those bad eyes until his mother thumped on the floor above, "Put away those books, Jake, and come to bed."

At nineteen the world widened for him again, almost by miracle. At nineteen he got his first pair of eyeglasses, and he saw for the first time the things he had never seen before. He told me once, standing in our church garden, that he never knew until he was nineteen years old that a rose was a beautiful thing. Moving in a daze of wonder, there came to him at that time a great desire to preach, to be a minister, to tell how good God had made things. He would be a preacher. But he couldn't make it—twenty years old and in the fourth grade! He did get ready for Ohio Wesleyan in four years, but couldn't make it through because those eyes went bad again. He quit college, and gave up all hope of the ministry.

Back into the paper business he went—buying it, selling it, eventually making it. And with this awakened mind in him, and hard work so characteristic of the immigrant, he struggled upward until he built one of the largest high-grade paper mills in America. Just out of Kalamazoo, Michigan, you will find it: a lovely community city, and at the center of it a church, the symbol of the Christ-Spirit which enlarged and inspired his life.

He died a few years ago and thousands of people came from everywhere to honor a millhand, a half-blind, ignorant millhand whose life the Lord had touched to be an incalculable force for good.

I am not saying that if you choose Christ you'll become a successful person. What I am saying is that no one knows the possibility that is wrapped up in any life. With the touch of Christ upon it, who knows? When you make a decision you never know what is wrapped up in it, or the choice you may make now in the quiet of your heart.

"The Kingdom of God," said Jesus, "is like a treasure hidden in a field."

The Way to Survival

. . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish
(LUKE 13:3).

THERE IS NO SUBJECT UPON WHICH SO MANY MILLIONS OF people agree, or agree with so prayerful a passion, as that the world must find a way to avoid the cataclysm of a nuclear shooting war. With both sides of this divided world now in possession of ultimate force in weaponry, we stand confronted with a possibility never before known to human beings: the total destruction of the earth. This has been said so often and by so many that I need not labor it now. The towering issue of our century is world survival.

So clearly has this question come to primacy that we find ourselves in an odd paradox: at the very moment when world problems have reached a maximum complexity, they have also been reduced to supreme simplicity. We have but one choice now to stay alive: we must learn some way other than war. No matter what the past has done, no matter what has been traditional in history, we have but one alternative: we must learn a whole new way to deal with an enemy, to combat tyranny, and to achieve security. We have reached the place where the old ways are no longer workable without massive disaster. We must learn another way or perish. That is now the clear verdict of life.

I wonder, as we confront this question, if it has occurred to us how relevant and timely it makes Jesus. The historical situation in which His life was cast, differing only in degree and magnitude, posed for His countrymen precisely the same question. When He said, "Except you repent"—that is, change your way of thinking and behaving—"you shall all likewise perish," this was, in part, the meaning in His words. We must learn a different way or perish.

It comes as a surprise to many people that some of the sayings of Jesus were not spoken directly to us. We have so long emphasized the fact that the teachings of Jesus are universal that we forget they are also local and historical; while in a wonderful way they do overleap the barriers of time and belong to all ages, they were nevertheless spoken in one age, in one land, to one people, at a certain point in time, and to a certain problem in that time.

What was the problem of His people? What was the issue uppermost in their minds? That is not hard to find. It was the Romans—how to deal with this enemy?—how to combat this tyrant?—how to defend the nation against the arrogant rule of Rome which had overspread the earth and subjugated all its people? The towering issue of His time was national security, national survival.

Do you suppose that Jesus ignored that question, or that His ideas were so spiritually lofty that they were unrelated to the most pressing, practical problem that troubled His people's souls more than all else? On the contrary, much of His teaching is unintelligible to us until we begin to hear it against the background of that problem. He lived His whole lifetime in the midst of it. He was pushed around by it. He was crucified on a Roman cross. He was born in Bethlehem—not Nazareth, because the Romans had ordered a tax enrollment. And for years

before His birth in Bethlehem those hills were filled with Zealots and knife-carriers fighting a guerrilla war against the rule of Rome.

Up and down the little land, all through His lifetime, the fires of fierce rebellion burned, particularly in Galilee where again and again the Romans were compelled to dispatch their troops to maintain order, which literally meant to slaughter dissenting Jews. Often He had seen crosses on a hill. Often He had seen Roman soldiers commandeer His countrymen in the street: "Here, Jew, carry my bag!" Often His heart burned hot within Him at these indignities.

I say it is important to remember that. Jesus lived His whole lifetime in the midst of a political revolution in which the urge for freedom, the call for revenge, the longing for Messiah, the patriotic passions of His people were aroused to intense and fever pitch. How to deal with an enemy?—that was the absorbing question. They were obsessed with it, as conquered people understandably would be.

They were hopelessly divided on the answer. Some groups among them took to the hills, hid themselves in the rocks and caves to live apart from the struggle. The Dead Sea scrolls have thrown a bit of light on that. Others thought it expedient to go along with the Romans and make the best of it. The Herodians, the Sadducees, the upper classes to whom religion didn't matter much anyway, lived in uneasy appeasement which was virtually a complete cultural surrender. The Pharisees were uncompromising but helpless to resist; they could only stand at the wailing wall, say their prayers, and call down ancient curses on the enemy with a heart full of hate and an arm powerless to strike.

The Zealots had the only answer, the age-old answer of violence: fight, kill!—how else can you beat your enemy?

What other way? And they were all aflutter for a while because they thought that the young Prophet from Galilee might be the promised one. He was the inspired Leader of a youth movement in Galilee; they would have made Him king at the nod of His head. At the height of His popularity, if He had given the word, thousands of swords would have come out of their hiding places to some meeting place in the mountains.

But He didn't give the word or nod His head. He had another answer. He had the stirring of God's mind in His soul. He had another way, and He said to them: "Except you change your way, you shall all perish." "See these great stones of the Temple? Not one of them will be left standing."

Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, a scant generation after Jesus was put to death outside its walls. Josephus, the Jewish historian, described it as the most horrible episode in the annals of human history. More than a million people perished there as the Romans with great strength moved in to put a final end to the Jewish revolt. The Holy City was set on fire and the beautiful Temple was leveled to the ground. It was literally true—"Not one stone was left standing."

Here, then, is a bit of history lifted now into larger light. Clear before us is the same question in global dimensions: learn another way or perish. What was the rejected way of Jesus, this other way which His countrymen rejected and which to all the centuries past has seemed impossible, but which now, against the prospect of global disaster, looms up as the inescapable imperative?

Suppose we try to analyze briefly the way of His resistance. Certainly it is a misuse of language to say that Jesus taught "nonresistance to evil"—which was the theological basis of pacifism. What He taught was nonviolent re-

sistance, resistance on a higher level, which is precisely what life is now compelling us to find.

His was the way of indirection, of meeting the enemy not head-on in frontal assault, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, evil for evil; but meeting him with higher force, outwitting him, rising above him, and therefore finally conquering him by the confrontation of "higher, stronger moral force." Security, like happiness, like salvation itself, is always a serendipity, an agreeable thing not directly sought but indirectly added in the earnest pursuit of something quite beyond it.

Suddenly this "other way" becomes highly relevant. Events today are pushing us—and the whole world—to the higher imperative of Christ, even while we emotionally resist it and scorn it as impossible.

Let us begin with the very minimum. The way of Christ is first of all *the way of undiscourageable patience*: "If your enemy compel you to go one mile, go two. If he strike you on one cheek, turn to him the other." This method of being bigger, of going further than justice demands or law compels, though scorned through the ages and ridiculed as weakness, is beginning to make good, common sense. Time was when patience was an expendable commodity. Back in the frontier days, in the so-called age of chivalry, if your honor were insulted and your enemy tweaked your nose, you could, without massive disaster, retaliate in kind (you get it on the westerns every Saturday night). You had to be quick on the draw to stay alive.

Suddenly patience has become the imperative necessity. Over against the violent men we must be the patient men, slow to anger, not easily provoked. We can't be trigger-happy in this world any more. In the possession of ultimate power, we must now possess moral power to restrain power.

Remember the story of the Gordian knot. The oracle promised a kingdom to the man who could untie the knot. Alexander the Great, hearing of the reward, made no attempt to untie it. Why should he waste his time? He strutted in and simply cut it with a swift stroke of his sword. Such has always been the way of the Alexanders. When weapons were swords, mankind without too much risk could, with the swift stroke of force, cut through its Gordian knots. Our own history is full of that. But now we dare not cut the knots. We must patiently untie them, no matter how slow, how difficult, how morally demanding the process.

We've been having some practice in it, by necessity learning it in Cuba, the Congo, China—taking insults, turning the other cheek, answering insolence not with insolence but with tireless though somewhat reluctant patience. Think of the indignities heaped on good men in the United Nations who have been patiently trying to untie the knots because the old ways are of no use any more. This is not to say that we are forced now to dispense with force, or that patience is enough—because it isn't. Patience without power is helpless. No one is dreamy-eyed enough to think we can manage without force in a savage society. Patience is not the absence of force; it's the restraint of it—and this now is the imperative. One of our generals said, "We have a new kind of world. We must wage a new kind of war. We must possess now the courage to be patient." It takes more courage to take an insult than to give one, to untie the knots than to cut them.

The task before us is not one of days but of decades, with no short cuts, no easy solutions, no permanent victories. We are predestined now to patience, to inch ahead bit by bit, item by item, never giving in to evil, never underestimating the evil designs of the enemy,

never giving up trying to overcome it. We are compelled now to take the long hard road of indirection, with undiscourageable patience, to untie the knots and await the verdict of world conscience. This was the way of Christ, by whatever name we call it, or by whatever motive we are pushed into it: "If your enemy compel you to go one mile, go two." Stay with him, keep walking, keep talking. Bear with what patience you can muster the animosities and immaturities of your enemy and try to control your own.

No one would accuse Winston Churchill of being overly sentimental. Just before he retired he said, "Patience and perseverance are now required, and must never be grudged when the survival of men is at stake. Even if we have to go through decades of bickering and vain parlance, that would be preferable to the catalogue of unmanageable horrors which is the alternative." Do we say this is impossible? Perhaps it is. It may be that human nature can't stand the strain of it. But just don't call it sentimental if the alternative is suicide.

Second, it's *the way of limitless good will*. "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? . . . I say . . . unto thee, Until seventy times seven" (MATTHEW 18:21-22). Limitless forgiveness—love-inspired resistance to evil that seeks not the destruction of the enemy, but the curing of the evil and the long-range redemption of the evildoer. Now, if some interpret that as soft-heartedness, neutralism, appeasement, or negative nonresistance—as many have done and do—it is simply because they have not grasped the total purpose of Christ. They have detached this one element in Him from the total purpose out of which His teaching comes. It is amazing how people pick out verses here and there, and think of Him as a gentle, peaceful Soul, moving

among hard-pressed people, dispensing sweetness and light. If Jesus was like that, how did He manage to get Himself crucified? He was the most unneutral, tough-minded, clear-headed Thinker this planet has ever seen. No one has resisted evil as courageously as He.

It is the idea that He is asking us to do nothing in the face of evil but lie down, be sweet, and get run over, that makes His teachings seem absurd. What He was after was the kind of resistance that wins, that lasts, that conquers enemies by dealing with the basic enmities and curing the evils that make them. What He is asking us to do—as He did His countrymen—is to go beyond the animal, jungle ethic into something more workable for humankind, to go beyond physical force into moral force, and to become skilled and proficient in the use of it, which is precisely what life itself is now compelling us to do since animal force has become so hideously impossible even to use.

Part of the madness of our time is in the fact that most of the brain power of man is still being poured into strengthening the animal, lengthening its arms, sharpening its claws, feeding its ferocity, making man a fiercer animal. Think of the enormous amount of intelligence required in preparing for or defending against modern war. There is no future for mankind if we concentrate our intelligence on being fiercer animals. That way lies death. "Except we repent of it, we shall all perish."

The hope lies now in another way, in becoming proficient in another skill. "Jesus," said Giovanni Papini, "had just one aim, to transform men from beasts into human beings by means of love, to save us from animality by a force more powerful than force." For thousands of years we've been proving it over and over: the spirit mightier than the sword, persuasion more powerful than coercion. We've tried the experiment of fierceness—eye for eye,

tooth for tooth—and the flavor of death is in it. We've tried the experiment of law, and have overleaped the law when it did not suit our passions. Jesus introduced another way. He was no dreamer dreaming dreams, and He was no cringing Christ. Two thousand years before atomic fire, He saw clear through the suicide of force. He saw with clear perception the light that is now beginning to break through our darkness: the utter futility of animal force to accomplish human ends. "Put up your sword—they who live by it perish by it." It takes a higher force to conquer an enemy.

If we won't take it from an idealist, we should listen to a realist—Napoleon, a man in whose head was so much brain and so little sense, until hard reality beat it into him. "Do you know," said Napoleon Bonaparte, "what amazes me more than all else—the impotence of force to organize anything. There are only two powers in the world, the spirit and the sword." In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.

The most moving sermon I ever heard Dr. Fosdick preach was in the midst of war time, and on the unpopular subject: "Keeping Faith in Persuasion in a World of Coercion." He was speaking on the word of Jesus: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw . . ." (JOHN 12:32). "We will never really conquer anyone," Fosdick said, "until we conquer him by persuasion and win his voluntary will. Think of the millions now in conquered countries outwardly defeated but inwardly unsubdued, and consider this mystery, that not all the coercion in the world can really conquer a strong soul. Apply it to ourselves. What does it take to conquer us? To defeat a nation with an army, leave it crushed and angry and resentful, is not to conquer it. It will not stay defeated." Then, with mounting emotion so powerful I feel it yet, he said, "We ourselves would not so stay defeated." Well,

would we? What can conquer us? Something great and holy lifted up to which we can willingly give our souls—that can conquer us; that has conquered us; and it still can conquer the world! Nothing else can.

Limitless good will, undiscourageable patience, is the impossible imperative which we must now learn or perish. The nations of the world are looking for that in us, for some higher force than force.

Add to it another factor growing out of it, *uncalculated generosity*. "If your enemy hunger, feed him." Paul said that, and he got his motivation from Christ. "You have heard it said of old time, love your neighbors, hate your enemies. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that spitefully use you." Still more of the same impossible imperative—a sharp break with old ways, a new way of dealing with enemies: resisting their evil not with evil but overcoming it with higher force. Sentimental? Impossible? What if it is turning out to be the inescapable?

We're not skilled in this technique at all. We have so little experience in it, even in personal relationships, that now, collectively confronted with this enormous world-enmity, we're profoundly afraid even to risk it. When some of our church leaders proposed that our government explore the possibility of sending a hundred ships loaded with surplus food to China to relieve famine and feed starving people there, some of our ardent patriots were shocked. "What's the matter with these preachers? They must be Communists or crazy!" The preachers said something that Jesus said: "Do good to them that hate you. If your enemy hunger, feed him." We're afraid to risk it. Yet we are being pushed to it as little by little the light breaks through that our ultimate security in this vastly imbalanced world depends on the way of uncalcu-

lated generosity, meeting evil not with evil but overcoming it with higher force. Not so wild a dream! See how, against all our inclinations, we are being maneuvered around to the missionary principle of the Christian gospel, step by step forced to embark on a world program which no nation before us ever remotely contemplated: meet the threat of an enemy not with animosity but with generosity, not with missiles but with missions.

Arnold Toynbee said, "We are waging now a missionary war." Shortly after the late President Kennedy's proposal to organize a Peace Corps of dedicated Americans to go out with light and knowledge into underdeveloped lands, Arnold Toynbee said, "Since in the atomic age military warfare means self-annihilation, it is likely that the competition between the United States and the U.S.S.R. will continue to be carried on by missionary rather than by military activities." Odd, isn't it, how the idealism of yesterday becomes by necessity the common-sense-ness of today?

One of the most pleasant memories of our time was the tingle of a telephone in Washington. Hardly had the announcement of the Peace Corps organization come from the lips of the President than the telephone began to ring. On and on it rang, until one week after the executive order had been signed there were almost four times as many volunteers as could be sent, and still they come. Why? Find all the faults in it you wish (I see some in it, too); but it still means this: the people of America have a hunger to do something with hope and heart and love in it, something more than animal. We are people living with a troubled conscience and a self-disgust. We're not happy spending these millions for unproductive ends while the world hungers for bread and light—fifty billion a year, almost a billion a week on a system of defense which we know can never really defend us, but

can only provide a breakwater behind which we can do the constructive thing.

Perhaps our sense of futility and self-disgust will teach us how to survive. Perhaps it will push us to the Way. There are two ways of dealing with an iceberg. One is the way of the Titanic—plowing full-steam ahead in a frontal assault on an iceberg. The iceberg didn't budge and the giant ship went down. The other is the way of the gulf stream which, with its warming waters, surrounded the same ice island and melted it away. When it comes to melting ice or the human heart, there has never been found anything as effective as warmth. "Love your enemies"—not so wild a dream! Is the way of Christ weak, sentimental, impossible? Consider the alternative: a nice, clean, fumigated planet with no people on it! What if the way of Christ turns out to be the inescapable?

twenty centuries—the powerful influence of Christ upon the minds of the ages. It is easy for us to lose sight of this. In our amiable human way of taking all good things for granted, as though they had always been here or had come out of our natural endowment, it is easy for us to forget how enormously Christ has changed the mental and moral climate of the ages, and how deeply His mind has penetrated the consciousness of mankind. Perhaps the best way to appraise it is to try to picture the world without Him; to imagine, if we can, what the world would be like if He had not been born.

Dr. Allen Knight Chalmers has suggested a helpful way of praying. "Sometime," he said, "when we are disheartened with ourselves and humanity in general, we should go into God's presence not with a neatly worded prayer on our lips, but into a dark room with an unlighted candle in our hand, just to sit there for a while—long enough to feel the darkness, to picture the black-out of hope in a world where no Christ had come. Then when we have thoroughly felt the darkness, the fears, the harshness, the hopelessness which the ancient world lived with daily, *then* to light the candle and thank God for the gift of His light."

It would take a considerable exercise of imagination to recall the darkness that was before the Light shone in. How would one rewrite the history of Europe with no Christ in it and no knowledge of His name? One would have to begin by pulling down the great cathedrals, the old monasteries, and many institutions of mind and mercy; destroy the writings of the scholars; thin down the poetry, the paintings, the music He inspired; blot out the names of leaders whose minds were shaped by His mind; leave the Huns, the Anglo-Saxons, and Norsemen—all our barbarian ancestors—untouched by the Light from Galilee. One would have to pull out of British history the

influence of Christ, the history of the church good and bad, the King James Version of the Bible, the very language of Milton, Bunyan, Tennyson, and most of the humane laws that came out of His compassion.

How could we start over on this continent and build again as though He had not been born? Suppose you could take this nation back a few hundred years, level down its buildings, and turn it back to the primeval forests which our forefathers found here? Then, instead of bringing to Jamestown, Plymouth, Rhode Island, and the rest, men and women who knew about the cross and were captured more or less by the Christian concept of life, repopulate this country with the followers of other faiths: Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed. What a completely different country this would be! Let your mind dwell on that a bit. A Quaker said, "If thee would study comparative religions, don't buy a book, buy a ticket." Take a journey into lands where the mind of Christ has not yet penetrated.

When Toynbee called ours a Christian civilization he didn't mean, of course, that we are wholly Christian or ever have been, but that the basic ideas which have been woven into our culture, customs, and common speech are inherited from hundreds of years of Christian light and teaching. If any man despising Christ wanted to escape His influence wholly, he would have a hard time doing it. He would certainly have to shy away from hospitals, orphanages, and many other institutions of compassion. He would have to by-pass many cities and even states. For example, he couldn't live in St. Petersburg; someone would be bound to question him about St. Peter. He couldn't live in Florida because Florida means "flowers of Easter," so named by Ponce de Leon, who landed on those coasts on Easter Day (there were so many flowers that he called the land Florida). Drive through some

rural areas of America sometime, and you may think that once there had been a Hebrew invasion of this continent: there are so many names transplanted from the Holy Land by the continuing expanding influence of Jesus. The man who wants to avoid Christ would have to be careful to whom he spoke, lest he shake hands with someone named John or James or Thomas or Andrew or Peter or Paul or Mary or Martha or Elizabeth—names made universally known by their linkage with the life of Christ. There are six million women in America named Mary, and every twelfth American male answers to the name of John, the beloved disciple of our Lord.

Furthermore, if the man would wholly escape Christian influence he could not send his children to the public school, because the right of every child to education, though divorced now from religious impulse, got its beginning in Christ. Nor could he go to Harvard, the first college in America, established by Christian clergymen; nor Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, Notre Dame, Chicago University, Northwestern, Oberlin, Duke, Emory, Southern Methodist, Vanderbilt, or a hundred other institutions of higher learning founded by people exalting the name of Christ.

He had better stay out of libraries, too, for our books are saturated with phrases, ideas, and issues straight from the mind of Christ. Wherever would he go at Christmas time not to hear the Name? In fact he couldn't write a letter or sign a contract without unconscious tribute to Christ in putting down the date, "the year of our Lord." History was split in two on the roof of a Bethlehem barn.

Powerful has been the influence of Jesus in the earth! Incredible has been the influence of Jesus! No one can live on this earth again as though He had not lived. We think as we think, believe what we believe, behave as we behave in large part because a Child was born in a Beth-

lehem grotto long ago. He has indeed put the mind of One into the minds of many. How?

What we want to dwell on here is not the fact of it, but the force of it; not the mystery, but the means, the method—*how* has He put the mind of One into the many? Right here we are confronted with the great miracle of which the little town of Bethlehem still stands as the abiding and most picturesque symbol: the powerful force of influence, indirection—that God should take this way of lowliness—making no frontal assault on the minds of men, bringing no pressure of His power, but trusting the whole revelation of Himself to the silent incarnation of a Spirit and the gentle penetration of an influence. The method is almost as miraculous as the mystery. And this is what in the Christmas story, year after year, despite all the claptrap around it, holds our hearts in a holy hush: the gentleness, the lowliness, the unobtrusiveness of God.

I don't know how it is with you, but to me the highest evidence of God's almightiness is in His lowliness. Surely His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways!

If we had stood back there in the Christmas morning before the outcome had been written out in history, we would have asked for something more spectacular and impressive. To us it would have seemed contrary to all human reason and logic to look for anything much to come of this weak and fragile thing, this "smallness of entry." It is against all the rules of common sense, as many have often pointed out, that Jesus should ever wield an influence in the earth; that One born in such obscurity in a family with neither wealth nor prestige, who went to no school except the local synagogue, who traveled never more than a hundred miles from home, whose public ministry lasted less than three years, whose recorded words can be read in an hour and a half, who

was repudiated by the leaders of His people, deserted by His closest friends, and executed as a common criminal—that *He* should leave a mark on anyone outside the borders of that little land!

Certainly, had the Almighty consulted us in this plan of His to save the world, we would have furnished Him with some helpful hints about strategy, particularly in the area of public relations—how to win friends and influence people. For we are experts here; we know how campaigns get organized, how great movements get started, how people are impressed with certain sound advertising techniques. Certainly Madison Avenue could have enlightened the Almighty on strategy, helped Him to get a right start, and planned a more successful and surefire conquest.

At least He could have had Christ born in a better place than this unpretentious stable, this “sorry place.” That’s no way to influence people! If He had located His birth in some ruler’s castle where He could begin with dignity and some measure of prestige; or if He had only waited until the world knew something about outer space—the impingement of other worlds, the existence of other worlds—and brought Him to the earth in a spaceship from another planet, full-grown, mature; and through a worldwide television network, let Him speak His truth in tones of unmistakable divinity to arrest the world’s attention and command the world’s respect. If only the Almighty would behave like the Almighty and move, as we say in diplomatic circles, “from a position of strength”; this would be the common-sense approach. But instead, what do we have?

*A song in the air, a star in the sky,
A mother’s deep prayer, a baby’s low cry.*

This weak and fragile thing—a Baby, a Carpenter in a workshop, a penniless Prophet teaching peasants, with no power in His hand except the truth that got Him killed outside a city wall. Said Studdert-Kennedy, speaking of the cross: "Surely there is no greater fool than God, to expect to win a world with that."

However, we need to study afresh this strategy of Bethlehem, this way of indirection, this curious way God takes to put His mind into the many. Because far from being a weak and fragile thing, it is part of what Paul said was "the wisdom and power and majesty of God." That's how God comes: not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit, by the magnetism of influence. "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." How strangely different are His thoughts from our thoughts! We are impressed with showy things, and God depends on lowly things. We like the mighty push, the big whoosh in the sky, and God takes the weak things to confound the mighty. We're in a terrible hurry; we want things done quickly. God starts a long way back, begins with a Baby, takes the way of indirection.

But no one in his right mind would call it weakness—the lifting power of an idea, the penetration of an influence—for by this process of indirection God works all His miracles on earth. When scientists talk about magnetic fields they are talking about this in the physical area—the magnetism of an unseen influence. How does the sun grasp and hold the earth in orbit? By magnetism of unseen influence. What makes the tide sweep in every day from every ocean? The pull of an unseen influence. What makes the trees and grass grow green? Every day nature performs this mighty miracle, putting color and vigor and renewal into all living things. And no one ever sees it happening. We don't see the powerful energy of the sun going into soil and seed and leaf and flower; it doesn't

advertise itself. Would you say that light is weak? Light! It doesn't come impressively; invisibly it incarnates itself and silently steals into every blade of grass.

When Jesus told His disciples how His Kingdom would come on earth, He said it would be like light, like salt, like seed growing up into a tree, like leaven in a bread bowl. Like yeast, His indwelling Spirit would permeate the minds of men. That's how ideas come. Is there anything more powerful than ideas that leap from mind to mind until the mind of one is in the many? Every turning point in history has swiveled on the penetration of an idea.

Copernicus had an idea, thought a thought about the roundness of the earth, and now we all think it. Martin Luther said something in the sixteenth century, and the effect of it is in all our minds. We think today the thoughts of Shakespeare; his mind is in our minds. We listen to the musical thoughts of Beethoven. So interwoven are the minds of men that once an idea has been born it moves like light from mind to mind until the mind of one is in the many. Here is a magnetic field for wise men to explore: the magnetism of an unseen influence.

Edward Everett Hale once said that a whole generation of Harvard men wrote good English because of Dean Ned Channing's influence. So God set down in the heart of the world the magnetism of a perfect Life, the Incarnation of His mind and will. He began with a dozen men, not exactly brilliant fellows; He would have been glad to have had better men. They were slow to understand what He said, ever slower to grasp what He was. But little by little the spell of His mind was on their minds, His influence fell on them, His thoughts became their thoughts, His words became their speech.

*He talked of lilies, vines and corn,
The sparrow and the raven;
And tales so natural, yet wise,
Were on their hearts engraven.*

He was on the dusty roads of the little land, in homes where people laughed, in homes where people wept. He was down where men were fishing and trading and sowing and reaping and swearing and praying—all so ordinary and unimpressive, yet by the powerful alchemy of influence He put His mind into their minds and left some bit of glory lingering to remind them He had passed that way.

I suppose there's no book of fiction written around the life of Christ more often quoted than Lloyd Douglas' book *The Robe*. Like the Gospels, it makes us look at Christ, not directly, but through the lives of those He influenced. He makes us look at the Roman centurion whom he names Marcellus, who won the robe of Christ in a lucky toss at the crucifixion. With that robe in his hand he got to thinking of the Man who wore it, and little by little he was caught in the spell of Christ. His curiosity took him through the lands where Jesus walked.

He lived for a while in the small village in Galilee where people had come under the influence of Christ. Some had been healed of illness, some of deeper sickness in the spirit; all of them cherished His brief touch on their lives. Even His casual words they had remembered. Jonathan, the little seven-year-old lad, had just given away his prized pony which Marcellus had given him as a present. "You're a brave little boy," Marcellus said. And Jonathan scurried off, unable to hide his tears. Then this strong soldier of Rome, who was brought up to know where real power lay—that is, in the mailed fist—got to thinking about how a little boy could be so generous and

unselfish. "This Jesus," he said, "must have been a man of gigantic moral power. He has been gone for more than a year now, yet He seems to be still alive. He has stamped Himself so indelibly upon this family that even this little child has been marked. It is as if this Jesus had taken a die and hammer and pounded the image of His spirit upon this Galilean gold. This man should have lived. He should have been given a chance to impress more people. A spirit like that, if it contrived to get going, would change the world. This man should have lived." Then, as the story goes on to tell, Marcellus came in due time to see that He was alive, the most alive Person on earth, and that His Spirit had contrived to get going in the minds of the many.

The glory of it is that He still continues. The miracle of Jesus is that He cannot be dated or shut up in the past, or in a book, or in a church. He is still out on all the dusty roads calling to men to follow. And the marvel is that we do—not well, but we do. One by one, as His influence falls on us, we are different. His thoughts are our thoughts; His words are in our speech.

*The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.*

So we come back to what we started out to say: the character of God, the nature of God, the almightiness of God is not concealed in Bethlehem. It is revealed there; veiled to be sure, but revealed. This is the way God comes: not by dazzling demonstration of power, but by a gracious indirection. We look for the power of God and we see a Child in a manger.

THE MIND OF THE ONE

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous Gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning once wrote a love sonnet to her husband, Robert. One morning at breakfast she slipped it into his pocket and ran upstairs. He opened it and read:

*The face of all the world has changed for me,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul.*

That is what Christmas means, too. Footsteps on the shore of Galilee, and the face of all the world is changed for us when, loving Him whose face we have never seen, we are caught and held and saved by an abiding influence that grows stronger with the years.

The angels said, "Fear not, good tidings unto you of a Saviour. And this shall be a sign unto you"—this shall be a *sign*—"you will find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." You always will; that's how He comes: not by might, not by power, but by the gentle penetration of an influence.



book says, is the shortest distance between two points. It isn't true. It isn't even true in geometry any more since Mr. Einstein challenged Mr. Euclid. It never was true in the progress of the soul. You and I, like those people long ago, are often confronted with the necessity of going the long way around.

So short a way to go—two hundred miles; so long a time to get there—forty years. Why? The New Testament says it was their unbelief. They “entered not in because of unbelief” (HEBREWS 4:6), which is just another way of saying that they were not ready for it. They were not prepared for the Promised Land. They were slave people with slave minds, and if God had delivered them to the land of their desire without a struggle or a scratch they would be slaves still, rattling around in an experience for which they were not ready.

Promised lands can't be entered too quickly. “Too much too soon” is the perfect formula for mediocrity. What we get too easily and reach too quickly, we esteem too lightly. Promised lands have to be prepared for, worked for, waited for, and deeply wanted. I venture that more than half our disillusionments come from grasping too eagerly for good fruit that isn't ripe.

I want you to look well at this story. Every year our Jewish friends celebrate the feast of Sukkos, the time of wandering in the wilderness. They have never forgotten that, for it was in the wilderness that they were made a nation. In the wilderness they received the Ten Commandments and the pattern of the tabernacle, and were transformed from slave minds to servants of the Most High. One reason this story holds a timeless illumination for all people is that among other things it points up in a vivid picture the important difference between God's way and ours. We're in a hurry; God isn't. We are petulant; He is patient. We like the short cut, the direct route;

God works mostly by the process of indirection. He takes the long way round.

I think it would do much to quiet the fevers of our fretful age if we would remember that and just soak our minds in the infinite patience of God, the steadiness revealed in all His works and ways. Go out in the woods and remember how God makes a tree. Sit by a great rock and remember how God fashioned the world. It didn't happen in a moment, as a magician waves his wand. As we trace the story in the rock formation we know now that God went a long way round to make the world. He still does. If you want a grape or a grapefruit, you can't have it now; you have to put a seed in the soil and wait. God goes a long way round to make a grapefruit. "Consider the lilies, how they grow." They don't spring from seed to flower in an instant. It is a long process of indirection, beginning ninety million miles away with the heat and light of the sun and the slow turning of the earth. That process of growth by indirection is in everything. It's in us. We don't leap from babyhood to manhood in a moment. It takes a bit of time and a lot of experience to get to be a person. One of the most characteristic words of the Bible is the word "wait"—"Wait on the Lord"; "Wait, I say, on the Lord." So the story is a vivid picture of the patience of God: "He led the people not the near way, but roundabout by way of the wilderness."

The whole idea, of course, runs counter to the modern temper. The way of the wilderness holds precious little allurements for twentieth-century Americans. Who wants the wilderness? Who wants to wait for anything? We're an aggressive generation, impatient with delays or detours, or even disciplines. We are schooled by all the trappings of a mechanical culture to demand that things be done at once. The push button has become our symbol, the open-sesame to the treasure house of immediate

and automatic service. When we want things done promptly, we push a button—to get a light, to call a secretary, to get a TV front seat at a baseball game, to get instant heat, or to start the three hundred horses in an automobile to get where we want to go quickly. The push button is the magic opener of doors. The pressure of the immediate is in our spirit. It shows up everywhere—on the billboards, in neon signs: “Why wait?” “Pay only one dollar down.” “Get it now!” “Clothes cleaned—one hour.” “Cars washed—two minutes.” The itch for the instantaneous! It shows up in the grocery store: the foods we put in our bodies must be precooked or at least made ready for immediate consumption. Someone really guessed the right approach to our minds when he dusted off the word “instant” and put it on all the labels: instant biscuits, instant coffee, instant cereal. The old, slow, three minute oatmeal, unable to compete with that, went further back on the shelf.

A little boy, shopping with his mother in a supermarket, picked up a box of something and brought it to her. “Oh, no, honey,” she said, “put it back. You have to cook that!” Who wants the long way round, even in a kitchen?

We are an impatient people, looking for near ways, short cuts, quick results. We are impatient with the slow processes of nature. We won’t permit nature to go its natural way. We’ve put our hurried hands on nature to push it. We use powerful fertilizers to push tomatoes, thyro-protein to push hens to lay, vitamins to push people; and even the busy honeybee, who normally travels eight miles a day, gets his daily shot to make him busier, push him faster, so he can carry to his hive-home a heavier cargo. In the University of California they are breeding honeybees as big as bumblebees. In how many fields are we manipulating nature, speeding up the process, as though saying, “Hurry up, world, get a move on! We can’t wait for anything to ripen on the vine”?

The impatience shows up in education. There isn't time today for what some call "the frills"—that is, the enrichment studies, the great books, the luxury of the long look at life, and the meaning of history. Skills, that is what we want; tools, techniques to help us get there faster. This is the age of the "short story," the "quick" magazine, the abbreviated "digest." Some writers say that even the novel is on the way out, displaced by television where you can see it at a glance—thirty minutes—and at one and the same time become an authority on deodorants.

Now this idolatry of the immediate, this itch for the instantaneous has put a vague, restless fever into our youth; they are fed every day with the ritual of pressure-advertising. Why wait for anything? You don't have to wait. Get it now! And so, by the near way and the short cut, they leap for promised lands for which they are not ready. We have teen-agers reaching for experiences that normally come in the twenties—young men of twenty offered incomes as high as men of fifty. Apparently incapable of postponing any desire, or leaving anything for advancing years to feed upon, they are so often used up before they are grown up—"too much too soon."

This story of God's way is important. He led His people roundabout by way of the wilderness. Every life needs the testing and the training of the wilderness; there is no real maturity without it. And we have to understand that the world we are surrendering to, the world that the advertisers are selling, is more than half a lie, unreal, and fictional. To be sure, some things you can get immediately; by pushing buttons, rubbing something on, or by paying something down, you can have them now. Some things you can acquire by the direct route, and we are not minimizing that. But the great things, the real values, do not come that way. It is simply not true that person-ality can be purchased, that skills can be mastered in easy lessons, or that soul-salvation can be wrapped up in a

prayer capsule. You may acquire a house on easy payments, but it still takes a "heap o' living" in a house to make it home.

*No matter what the real estate
Men say, you cannot buy
A home. You have to buy a house
And then pitch in and try
With prayer and love and elbow grease
To make it what you're after.
For homes are purchased, not with cash,
But tears and sweat and laughter.*

Cadillacs you may get with down payments; but culture, character—these you have to wait for, want, work out in the wilderness. I know that what we are saying now is old, so old that it is threadbare. But why do we keep fooling ourselves about it? If there is any other way to grow a soul, master a skill, or *be* something, I don't know what it is. There is no short cut, no easy way to anything.

One day Archibald Rutledge, in his daily walk up the mountain path, met a farmer walking up the mountain with an ax in his hand. He said he was out to get a piece of timber for his wagon. "Timber?" said Mr. Rutledge. "Here is timber," he pointed to the shaded valley, "plenty of timber." "Oh, no," said the farmer, "not that kind. I need the strongest, toughest wood I can get, the kind that grows up there where the storms hit."

If you find yourself now in some kind of wilderness—a spell of sickness or sorrow, or a broken plan that makes no sense—maybe you are where God can teach you something, where you are quiet enough to listen and humble enough to heed.

THE WAY OF THE WILDERNESS

*I asked God for strength that I might achieve,
I was made weak that I might learn to obey;
I asked for help that I might do great things,
I was given infirmity that I might do better things;
I asked for riches that I might be happy,
I was given poverty that I might be wise;
I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I
hoped for;
Almost despite myself, my deepest prayer was
answered.*

And so it is. God led the people not by the near way, which they wanted, but by the long way round they needed.

Now bring the light of this story up out of the realm of personal experience into the wider area of social hopes. Promised lands! Where do we want to go? How can we get there? Is there any other way to reach our social dreams except by the long way round? How naïve we sometimes are with the itch of the instantaneous in us. Because we push buttons to get what we want when we want it, because we can manipulate nature to speed it up, because we have grown up in an aggressive culture which encourages the belief that the way to get things in this world is to go after them, head-on, we bring that bulldozer habit of mind to our social problems and the area of human relations. We expect things to happen in a hurry—the near way, the direct route, the immediate solution. One of the most frightening aspects of our time is the desperate desire for swift utopias, the striving after good ends without taking the patient means, the attempt to make things happen our way, not God's.

Look out across the world and see how, in one country after another, people have made a leap for promised

lands they were neither ready for nor fit to live in. Contemptuous of religion with its emphasis on the changed heart, impatient with the slow processes of democracy and its inability to act quickly, they have called in the "strong man" or turned to some brand of coercive collectivism to get it done in a hurry. We've had a rash of them, these short cuts to paradise, utopias manufactured while you wait. The temptation is almost irresistible to millions in countries waking out of sleep and lagging far behind in what we call "progress." "Why wait?" the voice of temptation asks. "You don't have to wait. Never mind about freedom—it's obsolete. Forget it. There's no time any more for frills, religion, or even morals. Don't be too squeamish about murder or violence or the trampling of human rights. Force it, push it, make it happen. Get there now!" It is a terrifying thing as you see it being worked out.

If you remember, these are precisely the allurements that Jesus faced in what we call His "wilderness temptations." Look at them: every one of them is a temptation to take a short cut and win the world in a hurry. "Turn stones into bread"—win the world with the promise of prosperity; "Cast Thyself down"—frighten people, dazzle them, overwhelm them into immediate allegiance; "Bow down to the devil"—capture them by coercion, use the devil's tools to win God's victory quickly. Jesus was tempted with that. And He refused it. He took the long way round of the cross. There was no way to bring men to salvation except by the patient process of redemption, cleansing the human heart from sin and changing men from within. No short cuts—nothing but the long way round.

You would think that by this time we would have learned His wisdom. We have social dreams, too—good dreams, promised lands to which we turn our hopes. It is

THE WAY OF THE WILDERNESS

surprising how naïve we are yet, looking for near ways and short cuts—push a military button, drop a bomb, pass a law! We are convinced that there is nothing we can't get, given enough drive and good old American determination. Just pour in enough money and manpower and bulldozers, and there it is. We simply have not faced, realistically, what Jesus faced in the desert. The deep evil of the human heart is too stubbornly rooted to surrender to our oversimplified devices.

We are destined to live our days in uneasiness and continued strain. There are no permanent victories for peace or social and racial justice, and there is no mechanism that will deliver them with push-button promptness. The real test of the future will be more of our patience and endurance than of our boasted power. We are come now to the place where we must learn the patience of God—and that doesn't mean acquiescing in the evil or abandoning our hopes. We must work with persistent, unwavering patience with Him who holds in His strong hands the mighty pendulum of the years, with the Lord who led His people long ago and who still leads His people, not by the near ways and short cuts, but by the long way around.

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!*

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The God Who Waits

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II PETER 3:9).

SOMEWHERE ALONG IN OUR STUDY OF INDIRECTION WE BEGIN to see that serendipity has some profound theological implications. While it tells us much about the nature of life, it also tells us much about the nature of God, the kind of God who could create the kind of world in which serendipity is possible; a world in which man is left so much on his own, with freedom to search and seek and have dominion in creation without being overwhelmed by its Creator.

The writers of the Bible are unanimous in the faith that one of the crowning attributes of God is His patience and that His patience is a conspicuous part of His greatness. He is not the Almighty Dictator, the Grand Sultan of the universe, pushing people around and snapping His fingers to get His will done in a hurry. He is the God who waits—with infinite patience He waits; and it is not easy for human minds to grasp that. Patience is a human word with distinctly human qualities and it is difficult to apply it to an eternal Being who is all-knowing and almighty. How can we reconcile in our minds the

twin facts that God is power and patience—almighty, yet slow to act; and that He is just, yet puts up with injustice. It seems a contradiction. But we have to hold these twin ideas in our minds at once, however difficult it is. Part of His majesty is in His mercy, and part of His power is in His patience.

There were people back in early Christian centuries who were troubled with that; in fact, they were beginning to fall away from the faith, impatient with the slowness of God, the seeming absence of God. He had made certain promises about the future and nothing had happened. Scoffers were everywhere, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Things are no better than they were. Everything goes on, with no sign of God doing anything. The world is as full of evil as ever. What's the good of it?

The writer of this Epistle, whoever he was, moved in on that mood. Speaking to his fellow Christians he said: "We have a sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed. It's a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns. And we need to remember this, that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as we think of slackness. It's His patience—that's it. He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish. He will wait, wait for a thousand years as though it were a day. He limits His power by His patience, and waits for man to choose and to conquer."

You are as much aware as I am that we could quickly get beyond our depths in this. Through the years there has been endless debate on it: in philosophy, determinism; in theology, the sovereignty of God, the free will of man. We propose, however, to keep it within manageable proportions, at least in an area where we can think the thought. This is the small key to a great mystery: the God who waits for man.

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See it first in *the mystery of the undiscovered truth*. Think how the Creator has waited through long centuries of time for the mind of man to open, to break through, and to learn even a little about the hidden mystery of creation. All these powerful energies here—these here-before-we-got-here things—half-concealed, waiting for someone's seeing eye and hearing ear. The world was round a long time before anyone discovered it, and it was rich in hidden treasure long before anybody knew it. The scientists are the preachers of nature's gospel and their favorite theme is the patience of God, although they do not call it that and do not speak His name. With their incredible mathematics they tell how through millions of years the mountains were built up, the seas carved out, the great worlds fashioned, where distance must be measured by fantastic new yardsticks. The thoughts of God are long, long thoughts not scaled to our dimensions. And His ultimate purpose is veiled and shrouded in mystery.

They could have had electricity in the Garden of Eden, as Emerson once hinted. Nobody invented it; here it was, from the beginning of time, waiting. All discovery is simply a new grasp of something already there. Uranium has been here a long time, hidden in the rocks, bombarding the universe right under the nose of the scientists. Coall Oil! For long millennia before man came on earth, nature had been storing up the cellar with fire and fuel for his use; but for generations he shivered in his cold, damp houses, not knowing what was under his feet. Alexander the Great conquered the world and marched his armies over land rich with oil, those lands of the Middle East. In some spots it oozed out of the rocks, polluted the water, lay there on the sand. Moses' mother waterproofed his little basket with pitch. Tar, asphalt, oil—tons of it in the earth and nobody knew it, and wouldn't have known

what to do with it if they had. In fact, not too many years ago gasoline was a waste product, a by-product of kerosene. They didn't know what to do with it, and laws were passed to keep refiners from dumping it in the rivers. Illustrations at this point could be multiplied.

Trace the story of research in medicine, science, philosophy and see how slow has been the process of knowing about the world, about ourselves—here a little, there a little, bit by little bit coming through. And God—silent as the sphinx about it all. No sudden revelation, no breaking in to do what man should be doing for himself, no Self-advertising; just a hint here and there, as though saying, "Here it is, seek and you shall find." The God who waits! I don't know why the French existentialists are so wrought up about what they call "the frightening and frustrating absence of God." At least in one area we're not wholly in the dark about the why of it. A certain absence or hiddenness of God is essential for science and for faith. Too much light, too much divine intrusion would eliminate both. Who would want to live in a world without surprises, where every question was answered, everything done, everything known, and nothing left to discover? God has gifted man with incompleteness, and as urgently as he needs bread for his body he needs mystery for his mind—something not yet seen, not yet said, not yet known. If we were told we had reached the end of discovery, it would discourage us utterly. Dr. Harlow Shapley, after a lifetime study of the stars, said, "We can't escape humility. And as groping scientists and philosophers, we are grateful for mysteries still beyond us."

Lin Yutang, the brilliant Chinese philosopher, after a long excursion into agnosticism, has returned to Christian faith. In his autobiography *From Pagan to Christian* he said, "If I were God, and therefore a master chemist and physicist, I would be extremely interested in seeing how

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the chemists and astronomers and biologists on earth proceed to unlock my secrets. I would, of course, remain silent and give no help. But I would be very interested in watching their discoveries, giving them perhaps a century or two to pry open my secrets and think them over and work them out." So, even to our human minds there has come some hint of the divine wisdom that remains hidden, seems absent, and waits for man to discover.

We have learned a little, and it has meant so much. But around us still is the vastness, the mystery that stretches into infinity; and no matter how long man may live upon the earth, he will never lose his curiosity, never reach the end of mystery. For nature conceals herself behind a veil and God makes thick the clouds that surround the throne. Not His absence, but His patience is the key: God is forever waiting for man to break through to the undiscovered truth.

Move a bit deeper now; see it in *the mystery of unconquered evil*. Clear through the Bible runs the promise of a coming Kingdom of God's making, some final issue in the hand of God never clearly defined. The Kingdom of God! Prophets and Apostles pointed to it; good men in every age cling to it. And God, said this writer, keeps working toward it with an unwearying persistence. He is not slack concerning His promise, as it may seem to some. His slowness to act doesn't mean His lack of power to perform. He is not absent, as some complain; He is patient, beyond all our comprehension of that word. He limits His limitless power by His limitless patience and waits for man, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance; that is, come of their own accord and by their own free choice to a knowledge of His way.

Of course, this impatient world has never been at home

with such a God. We have never really Christianized our concept of God. We want Him to be in a hurry because we are; patience, in our book, is weakness. We want Him to be the Almighty, the Sultan on the throne, throwing His weight around, stopping wars, crushing enemies, putting an immediate end to tyrants, making things happen. In fact, one of the most marked moods of our own time is impatience with patience. We can't *wait* for things to happen; we have to *make* things happen. Millions have turned from democracy because it is too slow. They've pinned their hopes on the strong men who make things happen in a hurry. Many have turned away from the Christian church, lost all patience with it, because God is too slow. His way of waiting for the law of the harvest, His way of changing life from within is long and difficult. You get there faster by coercion and mass manipulation. Perhaps a fitting symbol for our time is the Polaroid camera: push the button, pull the picture—so typical of our passion for right-now things. We can't wait—nor be patient with anyone who is. We want right-now things, right-now pictures, right-now riches, right-now solutions, right-now social heavens. Our little moment is so short that we clamor for immediate results. And it's this human passion for immediacy that keeps alive the idea of the "sultan" God. We read our moods into His mind; we bestow on Him our wisdom, arm Him with our weapons, and make Him like ourselves. We know, or we think we know, what we would do if we had almighty power in our hands. There would be a funeral or two, well placed.

George Bernard Shaw was asked once what he would do if he had almighty power. If he could be Noah and another deluge came, who would he pick among the people of history to start a new dispensation? He flashed

back, "I would let them all drown!" And I suppose he would have.

Martin Luther couldn't understand how God could put up with man. "If I were God," he said, "and the world had treated me as it has treated him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces." And I suppose he would have.

But God is patient, long-suffering, and His purpose is not measured by the small dimension of our minds. The whole Bible is the story of the patient God, the record of maturing revelation, of His long struggle in the darkness to break through the dullness of man's mind—patiently training a stiff-necked people to be the people of God, getting them out of slavery, getting slavery out of them, putting up with their ignorance and disobedience, often their insolence, and never breaking in with overwhelming power to drive them to their knees. But always, like some elusive shadow in the dark, behind the dim unknown, God is keeping watch, waiting for their minds to catch on, to break through, and through their own experience make the discovery.

We need to come to terms with this: moral truth, like any other truth, comes not suddenly like the lightning flash but slowly like the dawn—first the darkness, then the twilight, then the dawn. It takes a long time for an idea to break through to the minds of men. And it must always be their own discovery, arrived at by many defeats and repeated failures. This perilous gift of freedom—the risk God took in bestowing it! There is no almighty sultan on a throne to override it. There's an Almighty Father waiting on His children as we must wait on ours. It took a long time for monotheism, the idea of one God, to be discovered. It took a long time for brotherhood, the idea of man's essential unity, to be discovered. It is taking a long time for the way of peace to be discovered, although there are many signs and signals.

Henry van Dyke once put in a few simple verses this roundabout way of God, this patient way of His of dropping a hint, waiting for man to find it; and when at last he makes the discovery, he sometimes takes the credit for himself.

*(One day) God said, "I'm tired of kings!"
 But that was ■ long time ago,
 And man kept saying, "No:
 I like their looks in robes and rings. . . ."
 So He crowned a few more,
 And the kings as before
 Kept fighting and spoiling things.
 But at last man said, "I'm tired of kings!
 Sons of the robber chiefs of yore,
 They make me pay for their lust and their war,
 I am the puppet: they pull the strings!
 The blood of my heart is the wine they drink,
 I shall govern myself for a while, I think,
 And see what that brings."
 Then God (who had made the first remark)
 Smiled in the dark.*

God is like that—not absent, but patient. He can wait, trusting with that huge faith of His that man will come to it after a while, catch on, break through, and of his own experience make the discovery.

I wonder if you've noticed how often in His parables Jesus talked about this, about God putting man on his own and withdrawing Himself, leaving the whole responsibility in human hands. ". . . the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods" (MATTHEW 25:14). There they were, on their own; God allowing man to be man and have dominion. In even the greatest

parable of the prodigal son there is no almightiness in the father to break the prodigal's will. He must, in love and patience, wait for a rebel son to make the discovery, to "come to himself." And that certainly brings it within the reach of our understanding, for we are parents, too.

A good friend of mine, Dr. Edward Crothers of New York, passed on to me a story he had found in his reading: "When Mother Went to the Mountains." A young woman born in the hills of Vermont married a farmer from Kansas and lived on a ranch in Kansas for twelve years. On that flat prairie she was homesick for the mountains and every summer talked about going home and spending at least a week in the mountains. Of course, it was only talk; there was no money to go with or time to get away. One summer, however, she talked so much about it that her hard-working husband said, "All right, honey, why not pretend? This is a big house, three stories. We never use the top story. Why don't you go up there for a week, get away from the children, and pretend you're in the mountains. We won't go up to you and you must not come down to us."

So she did. She packed a bag with enough food for a week, took some books she had always wanted to read, and went upstairs "to the mountains." On the first day she did what all people do when they go to the mountains—she slept. Next day she read those books. On the third day she thought she would like to look at the scenery. So out on the balcony she took a rocking chair and looked out across the flat lands, pretending she was looking at the Vermont hills. Then suddenly she heard voices, loud voices of her children on the lawn below. She just couldn't keep from looking down, and what she saw shocked her. There they were in various stages of dirtiness. One had a runny nose that hadn't been attended to for a long time. The littlest one had a diaper that hadn't

been changed since morning. They were dirty, irritable, quarreling. She could just imagine what the kitchen was like and the rest of the house. Her immediate impulse was to go down. But then she remembered the bargain: she was gone for a week in the mountains. So she just sat there, rocking and worrying.

Along about the fourth day, she made an important theological discovery. She felt that she now knew a little of what God felt, looking down on a spinning earth, and a sinning human race, seeing His children get unclean and quarrelsome. But because He had made them free, He must let them choose their way. He must deny Himself the deep impulse of the parent's heart to break in and break down the limitations He had imposed upon Himself. Love that knows how to wait—that's what the whole Bible is about.

No, not quite all of it. At least another word must be added that gives meaning to the rest of it. The infinite patience of God is most vividly seen in the coming of Christ, in the mystery of the Incarnation. We see Him on Palm Sunday; we have called it the triumphant entry. Triumphant? A Man riding into town, into the city of His death, on the back of a donkey. You get it all in this. The Jews were looking for a king, and God sent to them a Carpenter. We can never get over the wonder of this: that God should take this long way around, this way of indirection; that when He set out to perform His highest act in history, when He wanted to reveal Himself in the fullness of His power, He did not come with the pomp and pageantry of kings, but in the lowly garb of a Workman. Can anyone imagine a more risky, unlikely way for God to come? Not in strength—in weakness; not a palace—a stable; not a prince—a Peasant; not a sultan—a Servant; not a conqueror—a Carpenter.

Why all this anonymity, this hiddenness, this "smallness of entry," this veiling of divine majesty and power? "Why doesn't He land in force?" C. S. Lewis asks. Why did He not come in majesty and power, at least with enough splendor to impress, at least with enough overwhelming evidence of His almightiness that no one could possibly question or disbelieve? If we were launching a program of world conquest we would not do it that way. We would at least move from a position of strength to win an immediate response. Here it is again—the infinite patience of God. Power withholding power in the poignant drama of the cross.

Watch Him as He sets out to win the world—no show of force to drive men to His will, no robes of royalty, no pressure of prestige, no dazzling demonstration of divinity to overwhelm their minds and sweep them off their feet. So great was His respect for the dignity of the free soul, He would not use His power to overwhelm it. He took the way of indirection and patiently led them step by step until of their own free choice they came to it. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (MATTHEW 16:16). God is so humble, we do not even recognize Him when He comes. We expect Him in the spectacular; He comes in the commonplace. His royalty is His humility; His majesty is His modesty. ". . . behold, thy King cometh . . . , lowly, and riding upon an ass . . ." (ZECHARIAH 9:9).

It's such a reversal of all our ideas of power that the true image of the Almighty God is revealed in a Man who came to earth through a stable, made Himself of no reputation, and died one day on a cross; that He has no might to win except the power of a love that never gives up and never breaks down. He does not thrust Himself upon us. He does not blind us with an excess of light. He

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waits for us with infinite patience until we come to it,
until we bend the knee to Him who is the Lord of life.
Where is the promise of His coming?

*Thou shalt know Him when He comes,
Not by any din of drums,
Nor the vantage of His airs,
Nor by anything He wears,
Neither by His crown,
Nor by His gown,
But His presence known shall be,
By the holy harmony,
Which His coming makes in thee.*

The Turn of an Idea

. . . seek, and ye shall find . . . (MATTHEW 7:7).

ON THE WALL OF A CHEMICAL LABORATORY IN BOMBAY hangs a motto with this unusual inscription: *Il faut chercher pour trouver, mais pas pour trouver ce qu'on cherche*. A friend of mine saw that motto, copied it, translated it, and knowing of my unusual interest in serendipity, sent it to me. Translated it means, "You *must* search to find, but not to find what you are searching for."

Through the pages of this book we have attempted to trace the strange process of indirection for which Sir Horace Walpole coined a fascinating name—"serendipity, the gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for." I hope that through our enthusiasm for the word we have not overstated it, or through the overuse of words obscured it. It is a process that runs all through life with almost the force of a law. Some of the most valuable and agreeable things, such as happiness, peace of mind, greatness, and security, are not found by directly pursuing them. We seek a higher thing—the Kingdom of God—and these other things come along indirectly; they are added unto us.

I would like this closing chapter to be somewhat of a summation and its closing words to be the expression of a

Christian hope concerning the plan of God. History is full of surprises; in fact, the verdict of history itself is that progress is mostly a surprise party, not always planned for, often not intended; it comes indirectly, often unexpectedly out of events and insights which at first seemed remote and unrelated.

We have grown accustomed to this, so much so that we've come to look for surprises and to expect the unexpected. This is particularly true in the area of research. These exceptionally gifted men whose life work is mostly in the area of ideas—pure science, basic research—are no strangers to serendipity. To be sure, they are annoyed with the popular misconception that discoveries are accidental. (Let me digress here to say that having read three times the Persian *Tale of the Three Princes*—a very dull tale, by the way—I had the uneasy impression that Sir Horace had missed something in his definition. The emphasis in the story is much more on the Princes' sagacity and ability to observe than on their chance experiences.) Men engaged in research know the meaning of the Bombay motto: you *must* search to find; you must be prepared to find; you must bring to it a trained and disciplined mind—but not necessarily to find what you are looking for. They are familiar with the surprises. They know that the results of research are often quite different from that which was intended.

Dr. Irving Langmuir of General Electric, in an impromptu speech to his fellow workers, said, "A large part of a research laboratory's work is *based* on the art of profiting from unexpected occurrences. You can't plan discoveries. You can only plan work that will probably lead to them. You don't know all the things that are going to happen. Too many of them are unexpected. And it is many of these unexpected things which are likely to be the most useful things you do."

A nuclear chemist in Berkeley, California—Dr. Albert Ghiorso—in answer to a reporter's question concerning the motivation of research, said, "Why do we do all this? Just curiosity, mostly. We want to decipher the puzzle. That plus the fact that every now and then we surprise ourselves by discovering something really useful. You never know what's going to happen. That's the fascination of it."

That is the fascination of life in every area. It is what the Japanese also have a word for—*shibui*, the beauty of the unexpected. The way in which apparently aimless curiosity and seemingly insignificant happenings refuse to be useless, but lead instead to important goals, is a romantic and an often incredible part of our human experience.

Trace it first in the business market—how industries are born, how business ventures (including some major ones) get started out of very minor happenings, a chance remark, an accidental insight, an unexpected turn of an idea. How do useful ideas come? Mostly when we're not directly looking for them. A young French physician, relaxing one day in a Paris park, watched some children play a game in which they tapped out messages to each other along an old discarded plank. A boy at one end would tap the plank with a pebble and a boy at the other end with his ear on the plank would decipher the message; and now every doctor has one hanging around his neck—a stethoscope! A swaggering lord in England put a piece of meat between two slices of bread and his name, Lord Sandwich, has become a household word and for some college students almost a way of life.

The comic strip *Dennis the Menace* provides a hint of how a small idea can become a life-size occupation. Hank Ketcham came home from work one evening and

found his wife in tears. "Hank," she said, "our son Dennis is a menace." That did it! Hank is a cartoonist and, like the Princes of Serendip, equipped with a certain sagacity.

One night Edna Ferber sat with a few actor friends on the stage of an empty theater. Their play had flopped dismally and they were consoling each other. One of the group, trying to be encouraging, said, "Cheer up! Never mind! We'll charter a showboat, drift down the river, and play to the natives." He meant it as a joke. But Edna Ferber didn't laugh. She wrote a book, then a play—*Show Boat*.

In the year 1528 one of the treasures Cortez sent back to Spain from Mexico was the formula for a drink called *chocolatl*. It was the favorite beverage of the Aztecs. They made it from the seed of the Cacao tree boiled in water and flavored with vanilla. The Spaniards didn't like its bitterness, so they added sugar and other spices. Later a pharmacist in Atlanta added something to cure headaches—and now "Things go better with Coke!" The first grapes grown in California were muscats brought there by Franciscan monks who used them to make sacramental wine. In 1872 a severe hot spell shriveled the grapes on the vines. One farmer sent his crop of dried-up grapes to a grocer in San Francisco to get what he could for them. The grocer with some imagination advertised them as "Peruvian Delicacies," sold them out at a good price—and Sun-Maid raisins were on their way. Big business out of small happenings.

When Benjamin Franklin put his kite up into the storm, he had no idea he was starting a business. Like the "curiosity that killed the cat," that first spark from the sky could have been the end of him. But it wasn't. It was the beginning of an industry which is now vast beyond calculation. It has put millions of miles of quivering wires across all continents and filled our homes and factories

with hundreds of mechanical slaves which at the beck of a button perform our tasks of drudgery.

When the veterinarian Dr. John Dunlop made a pneumatic tire, he had no idea of starting a business. The automobile wasn't yet born. The streets of Belfast, Ireland, were paved with cobblestones and every day Dr. Dunlop's small son rode to school over them on a solid-rubber-tired tricycle and complained about the roughness. His father said, "I think I can fix that." Around the edge of the wooden wheel he fastened a canvas loop and inside the canvas placed an inflated rubber tube.

We've been doing that ever since, with some assorted improvements by Dunlop, Goodyear, Firestone, and others. Life is so arranged that what happens in a moment may go on having significance for a long time. And you never know when some large issue will come out of some small corner and some major enterprise will swivel on the turn of a chance idea.

Now go further and trace it in the area of social change—how new ages are born and new worlds fashioned by events and ideas not intended to produce them. Who intended the discovery of America? No one—not even the discoverers. Who planned the machine age? Who sat down with a blueprint in a briefcase and said, "Let's have an industrial revolution?" No one!

Historians are unanimous in the complaint that history is unpredictable. You can't plan history. You can't predetermine it. You can't even accurately predict it. Why? Because of serendipity—the unexpected. History is full of surprises. You never know when some man will think a new thought and history will take off in a new direction. You never know when some unforeseen discovery lurking around some hidden corner will leap out and shout, "Surprise!"

Every scientific advancement has had profound effect upon man's social life and put new problems in his hand. Every major breakthrough has widened his thought and altered his mental outlook.

Someday some brilliant mind with a sense of history will write down the astonishing story, the measure and manner in which man by his inventions alone has revolutionized his social environment and without intending it ushered in great cultural changes: the man who made a compass; the man who made a magnifying glass; the man who made a chair and got us sitting upright instead of crosslegged on the floor; the man who pulled the whistle on the first steamboat; the man who put the human race on wheels; the man who invented a printing press and brought in an age of public education and the making of many books—all the way to the shaggy-haired man who scribbled in a notebook " $E = MC^2$." Many men have shaped history or misshaped it without intending to do it, in fact without knowing that they did.

The striking thing in all of it is the indirectness, the big issue invariably coming out of some small corner. Certainly Galileo had no intention of cracking open the Middle Ages. He was a thoughtful fellow with a fondness for mathematics. One day, when just a boy of seventeen, he sat in church, the cathedral of his native city. In the midst of the service he looked up at the lamps hanging by long chains from the high ceiling. And something happened there. He found himself thinking not about the service, but about those lamps—wondering why, without something moving them, they moved, and moved to a rhythm he could measure by counting his pulsebeat, the only timepiece he had.

Why is it that some people see what all the rest of us miss? I came to a heightened appreciation of Galileo's quality of observance when I learned that in our church

there hangs a pendulum right in the center of the chancel. A long wire from the high ceiling holds at its end a pencil microphone, and during a morning service it moves almost two inches. An engineer sat in church one morning and afterwards told me that he didn't hear the sermon because he was watching and thinking about the pendulum. I suppose Galileo didn't hear the sermon either.

What a small happening—that a boy should sit in church and think a vague and fuzzy thought about the nature of nature! But in that lucid and lucky moment a small insight was born which, with its subsequent development, as one of our most noted physicists has said, “marked a turning point of such importance as to influence every phase of human thought.” Big issues out of small corners! When Lowell said, “We see dimly in the present what is small and what is great,” he meant that the historical significance of an event is almost never recognized in the moment of its happening.

In the light of that, suppose we reexamine the great social revolution in which we are now involved. The main event of the twentieth century is not this or that discovery, but what the discoveries have issued in—the emergence of a new world concept, the full magnitude of which is not yet apparent. Distance wiped out, boundaries erased, the world made physically one, new social problems, difficult decisions to be made. Who intended this?

We have a new birthday to celebrate, the birthday of the world. There never was a world before this century; or if there was, nobody knew about it except a few missionaries and global gadabouts. We had the birth of nations, states, empires—but no one knew about the world.

Who planned it? No one, exactly. It came out of the confluence of many notions, dreams, and seemingly un-

related events. It began to be born when James Watt made a steam engine, when Michael Faraday made a magnet by winding some copper wire around a piece of iron, when Henry Ford put a gasoline can on the wheels of the old buggy. Edison helped the world to grow; so did Marconi, Leonardo da Vinci, Alexander Graham Bell, Samuel Morse, Sir Ernest Rutherford, Heinrich Hertz, DeForest with his vacuum tube, and a host of others, many of them unnamed. They didn't know they were doing it. They had no idea they were creating a social revolution. When the Wright brothers put their contraption up over Kitty Hawk they had no thought of its social consequences. They had no vision or intention of fashioning one world.

Who then did intend it? Who was the Planner if the men who shaped it had no plan? Here is where we must arrive with every human question. What does the event mean—any event—in terms of divine purpose as it is revealed to us in Christ? Is there a higher Mind working through man's mind, a purpose partly hidden from our eyes, "A Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will"?

Finally, then, consider the process of indirection as one of God's wise ways of getting His will done. Out of the small corner comes the great issue. Out of the unexpected comes the event that no one had thought about. Who did intend?

We have been oversold on the idea of divine absence and misled by the doctrine of absolute transcendence, as though God were outside our common life or above it, breaking in only upon our human request. We enormously impoverish life when we think of God as "utterly other" or when we think of this whole contribution of the human mind, the breakthrough of the past few centuries, as a merely secular enterprise having no relation to God's

saving purpose for mankind—when it is God Himself who is the Designer, the Planner, and the impulse of every creative deed.

In the beginning was a Word, a plan, a design. Of course, it may be utterly beyond our human imagination but it is not beyond our human cooperation. And many are the cooperators who do not know that they are.

Here they are, the creative minds of the world, the inventors and builders who have shaped this turbulent age. Some of them are believers and some of them are not; some have a social concern and some do not; but in their deepest instincts they all seem linked, consciously or unconsciously, in one supreme enterprise—the conquest of space and time, the breaking down of barriers to make what Dr. Hocking calls a “single civilization,” the making of earth one body. Certainly no one has contributed more to the physical oneness of mankind than the builders of railroads, steamships, and jet planes—or the inventors of telephones, television, Telstars, and all these wonderful tele-things. They have succeeded far more than theologians or philosophers in making humanity one—not that they intended to do it or had the faintest notion that they were.

Inventors invent for love, for money, for fun, or because they just can't help it, almost as though they themselves were but instruments moving toward a unity they did not intend and by simply following their instinct to create cooperating unknowingly with a Power that *did* intend. It is as though all these different *minds*—unknown to each other, thinking in their special ways, working in their various fields—were thinking the thought and expressing the will of *one Mind* greater than them all. Guizot, the French historian, once said, “Man advances in the execution of a Plan which he has not conceived and of which he is not even aware.”

These are times when we have a curious sense of standing at the edge of a vast unknown. Our society is undergoing a structural change so profound that no aspect of our lives will remain untouched by it. Many have the feeling that something above our heads is trying to break through our dullness, that we are being influenced, even against our emotional resistance, toward what Winston Churchill once expressed as a "Great Design being worked out here below of which we have the honour to be the faithful servants." To be sure, God gets His will done through His servants who are consciously dedicated to it. But He also achieves His purpose through many unwilling servants who do not love or even know His name.

There's an interesting story about Thomas Edison. It is said that he had at the entrance to his home and on the fence that surrounded it a heavy, clumsy gate. One of his friends often wondered about that gate and why a man of his standing would put up with such an unattractive gate on his property. One day he ventured to ask about it and to suggest casually that Edison get something more modern and easier to close or open.

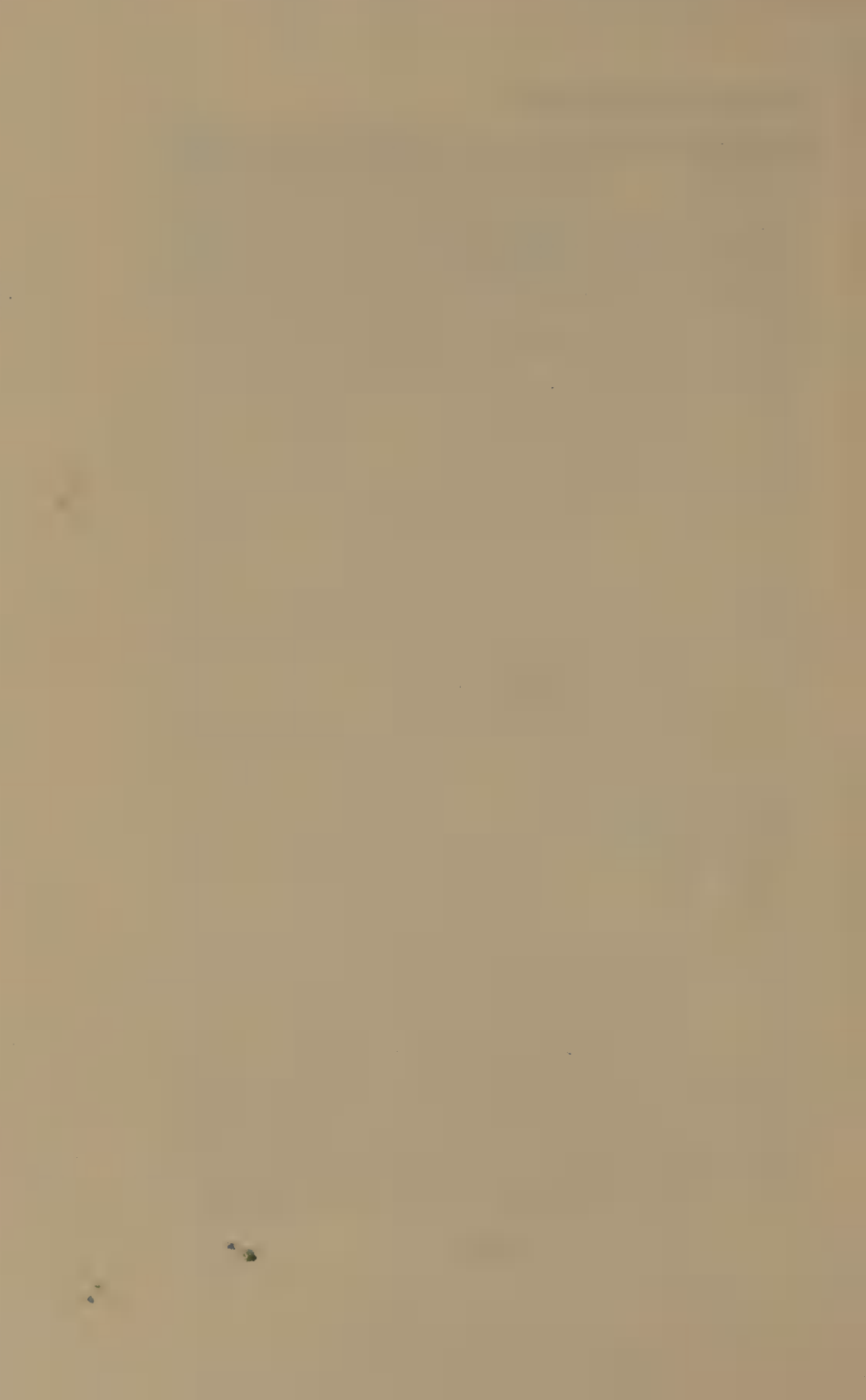
Mr. Edison looked at him with a twinkle in his eye. "Come," he said, "let me show you something." He showed him how the big gate was geared-in with a pumping contraption and said, "You see, every man who comes to see me and opens or shuts the gate automatically pumps a gallon of water into a tank on my roof."

It is so fatally easy to limit God to the ways to which we are accustomed that we need often to be reminded of the broad sweep of His sovereignty—a sovereignty so wide that one of the great souls of the past said, "He makes even the wrath of men to praise Him." There are many instruments serving His purpose, quite outside the churches. Everyday the most unlikely people pass

THE TURN OF AN IDEA

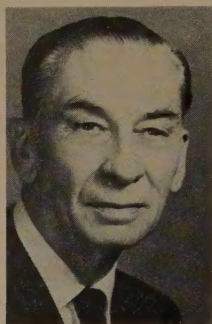
through His gate and without intending it—often without knowing it—make some contribution to His purpose.

Back in 1930, a discerning editor of a New York magazine said, "The children of the Kingdom are the friends of God—building with Him they know not clearly what. They have never fully known. Every unfolding of the Divine life within them and within history has been for them a surprise."









About J. Wallace Hamilton—

In 1929 a zealous young minister faced an almost impossible task. He had been called to the Pasadena Community Church—a church which had been built during Florida “boom” days but now stood almost empty—seven miles out of St. Petersburg. With only four short years of experience, the young preacher faced the task of bringing that church back from oblivion, armed only with hope, a deep faith, and a new wife.

Thirty-five people came to hear J. Wallace Hamilton that first Sunday, but those few came again, bringing others. They liked the simple, direct way he preached. His square-hitting sermons not only built up their faith, but coupled it with living, to make their religion vital. Today it is not uncommon to have ten thousand people attend a Sunday morning service; some on the pews inside, some on benches and the grass outside, still others listening to the inspiring message from their cars.

In recent years, Dr. Hamilton has been released from church responsibilities for several months of the year for speaking engagements, travel and writing. He is the author of *Horns and Halos*, *Who Goes There?*, *Ride the Wild Horses!* and *The Thunder of Bare Feet*.

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